

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

A standard linear barcode is located in the top left corner of the label. It consists of vertical black lines of varying widths on a white background.

3 1761 00938820 8



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation









②



*Madonna*, by Raphael.

# SELECT POEMS

PRESCRIBED FOR THE JUNIOR MATRICULATION AND  
JUNIOR LEAVING EXAMINATIONS,

1908.

---

EDITED WITH

*INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND APPENDIX.*

BY

W. J. ALEXANDER, PH.D.,

*Professor of English in University College, Toronto.*

---

TORONTO:

THE COPP, CLARK COMPANY, LIMITED.

1907.



972894

Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand nine hundred and seven, by THE COPP, CLARK COMPANY, LIMITED, Toronto, Ontario, in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture.

PR  
5553  
A5  
cop 3

## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

In the present year, Browning's writings are, for the first time, represented on the High School curriculum. This experiment has been made in response to a widely expressed desire for some variety and freshness in the literature prescribed. On account of the novelty and occasional difficulties of the selections from Browning, the comment has been made fuller than is usual in this series of annotated texts. It is, notwithstanding, hoped that the province of the teacher has not been trespassed upon unduly. As an Introduction the editor has ventured to reprint a popular exposition of the nature of literary study delivered, now some eighteen years ago, as an inaugural lecture on the occasion of his entering upon his duties in University College.



# CONTENTS.

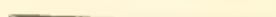
	<small>PAGE</small>
INTRODUCTION: A Lecture on Literature	vii
SELECTIONS FROM TENNYSON:	1
The Poet	3
The Lady of Shalott	9
Oenone	18
The Epic	19
Morte D'Arthur	29
St. Agnes' Eve	30
"Break, break, break"	30
The Voyage	34
In the Valley of Cauteretz	34
SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING:	35
My Last Duchess	37
Cavalier Tunes	39
" How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix "	42
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad	42
Andrea Del Sarto	50
Up at a Villa—Down in the City	54
Love Among the Ruins	57
The Guardian Angel	59
An Epistle	69
Prospice	69
NOTES ON TENNYSON:	71
Life	79
General Characteristics	102
The Poet	104
The Lady of Shalott	109
Oenone	117
The Epic	120
Morte D'Arthur	130
St. Agnes' Eve	131
"Break, break, break"	131
The Voyage	132
In the Valley of Cauteretz	132

## NOTES ON BROWNING:

	PAGE
Life . . . . .	133
General Characteristics . . . . .	140
My Last Duchess . . . . .	149
Cavalier Tunes . . . . .	154
“ How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix ” . . . . .	156
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad . . . . .	158
Andrea Del Sarto . . . . .	159
Up at a Villa—Down in the City . . . . .	168
Love Among the Ruins . . . . .	170
The Guardian Angel . . . . .	172
An Epistle . . . . .	173
Prospect . . . . .	179

## APPENDIX: Selections for “Sight” Reading—

1. My Star . . . . .	<i>Browning</i>	183
2. Song from Pippa Passes . . . . .	“	183
3. Another Song from Pippa Passes . . . . .	“	184
4. Apparitions . . . . .	“	184
5. One Way of Love . . . . .	“	184
6. Home-Thoughts, from the Sea . . . . .	“	185
7. The Lost Leader . . . . .	“	185
8. Among the Rocks . . . . .	“	186
9. The Boy and the Angel . . . . .	“	187
10. Rabbi Ben Ezra . . . . .	“	189



# INTRODUCTION.

---

## A LECTURE ON LITERATURE.\*

---

Perhaps in no subject of study is there a more general and widely diffused interest than in literature. All who read, and they in our day and generation constitute a very numerous and varied class, are in so far students of literature. It is partly for this very reason, from the fact that so many ill-trained and half-trained minds are in some measure devoted to its pursuit, that the aims and methods of literary culture are so generally misapprehended. The popularizing of a subject brings the claims of mediocrity to the forefront, and there follows the inevitable attempt to find some easy mechanical method whereby the secret of literary enjoyment and literary culture may be attained. Men adopt the method, and ignorant of the true outcome of literary training, are unconscious that they miss the aim. Perhaps, for example, the aspirant to culture conscientiously wades through a supposed authoritative list of the one hundred best books. He completes his tale, the incongruous selection of individual caprice—*The Iliad*, the *Koran*, *Don Quixote*, *Sirtror Resartus* and so on—without one moment of keen literary enjoyment, unthrilled by a single passage, with scarce an iota of permanent result in the shape of intellectual openness, flexibility, and polish which literature ought to give. He has won only the self contentment and self satisfaction of the sciolist, the worst outcome of that dangerous thing, a little knowledge. It is not the reading of many books, be they one hundred or one thousand, but the manner in which they are read that is essential. One play of Shakespeare properly studied and properly appreciated will do more for literary culture than countless books, however excellent, read as most people read them. I think it very necessary therefore that, in entering on our work together, we should come to an understanding as to the aim of our studies, and the results which we expect to flow from them, and as to the methods by which these results are likely to be best attained.

---

\* Originally delivered as an Inaugural Lecture in University College, 1870.

The term literature, like most others, is ambiguous in its use, and susceptible of a wider or of a narrower meaning. If we take it in its widest sense, in the sense sanctioned by its etymology, literature is written thought. Anything written, provided it is not a mere jumble of words or letters, but represents some idea, belongs to the domain of literature. Of the infinite thoughts which have swept in ceaseless streams through the numberless minds of successive generations, a few were recorded, and of these again, a few are still preserved in written language. This is our material, be the nature of the ideas and the form of the expression what they may. Not merely the stately epic, the elaborate philosophical treatise, but the familiar letter, the monumental inscription, the scribbled sentences on Pompeian walls, form a part of the literature of the world. So that we may find ourselves concerned not only with such works as *The Iliad* or *Lear* but with others like *Euclid's Elements*, or Darwin's *Origin of Species*, whose claim to the title of literature would be less generally admitted. In periods fertile of books, it is true, the purely literary student gives such works scant attention, but in more barren times he is glad enough to consider them. The historian of Early English Literature readily admits the baldest statements of facts, and does not scruple to dignify the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the laws of Ine with the name of literature.

Since, then, literature includes all sorts of books, philosophical, historical, scientific, and so on, we must next ask, how is the work of the student of literature differentiated from that of the philosopher, or historian? It is evident he is concerned with books only in so far as they are literature, *i.e.*, only so far as they are the expression of thought. One book may be intended to enlarge the bounds of philosophical knowledge, another to teach political economy, and in so far the aim of one book and one writer differs from that of another. But this much they have all in common, they are all representative of certain phases of thought and feeling in the mind of the writer, and it is his intention to reproduce these phases in the minds of others. It is the business of the student of literature to realize that intention. The written symbols are before him; it is for him to reproduce within himself the mental condition to which these symbols correspond. His work is simply that of interpretation. The scientific man reads the *Origin of Species* mainly to get at the truth which it may contain or suggest. The literary student, as such, stops short of that; it is his peculiar business to determine what exactly Darwin meant. So it is,

that we students of literature are interested in all departments of thought, and yet stand apart from and outside of all. Let us suppose, for example, that we are sceptical of the utility of philosophic discussion, as such, think metaphysics a fruitless wrangle. Yet that does not prevent us, in the course of our study of the literature of England in the eighteenth century, from being deeply interested in the works of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. We set ourselves to determine just what these treatises of theirs contain and mean, not necessarily because we suppose they will afford any substantial philosophical result, but because we want to know what men have thought, because of the insight we gain into the character of these writers, and of the age and nation in which they lived.

It must not, however, be granted that, because the work of the student of literature is thus limited to interpretation, it is thereby adjudged to be unsatisfactory or superficial. Interpretation in its fullest sense gives, as I hope to show before I close, abundant scope for the highest exercise of our faculties, and leads to the profoundest investigation of human nature. At times, indeed, our task is comparatively easy. Euclid writes: "Two straight lines which are parallel to the same straight line, are parallel to one another," and this is a proposition whose terms we have merely to comprehend, in order to attain Euclid's point of view in writing it. But if we turn, for example, to the works of Herodotus, we find numerous stories whose terms indeed are not less easily comprehended than those of Euclid, but which strike us as childish or incredible. In merely understanding their purport have we reproduced Herodotus's state of mind in writing them? Did the stories seem childish or incredible to him? The question calls for literary investigation. The student must examine the whole work of Herodotus, and determine its general scope. He finds that it professes to be a serious history, and comes to the conclusion, perhaps, that Herodotus gives the narratives under consideration in all seriousness and good faith. Still he does not understand the author's state of mind in writing the passage. How came a man of evident intellectual power and culture to believe fables whose absurdity is manifest to the school boy of to-day? To answer this question the student betakes himself to the study of Greek history and Greek modes of thought: and until he has thrown himself into Hellenic life of the fifth century and grasped Herodotus relation to the civilization of his time, he will not have attained the aim of literary study, the reproduction in one's

self of the writer's state of mind. Or again, before we can be said to understand the Dialogues of Plato, we have many problems to solve. In the Socrates here represented, did Plato intend to give a picture of the historic Socrates? In how far are the opinions put in Socrates's mouth held by the author himself? What is the explanation of the manifest fallacies which occasionally mar the reasoning of the dialogues? In answering the last question the student learns how the intellectual power even of a Plato is subject to the limitations of his time, and unable, without the assistance of a formulated logic, to escape the snare of simple fallacies, and how the study of a language other than the native tongue was needful to enable men to distinguish between the thing and its name. Such inquiries as these give the positive results of literary work. How necessary these preliminary determinations are in order that the works of Herodotus and Plato may be used by the historian and philosopher, respectively, is sufficiently apparent. So in all departments of study, written authorities must be submitted to the crucible of higher criticism (as it is called) before they may be safely and profitably employed. We may realize the importance of such work by recalling the fact that the most interesting and one of the most active provinces of the higher criticism in our day is the canon of the Old and New Testaments. The revision of the Authorized Version is an attempt by literary students to determine more exactly what the various sacred authors actually said; while the recent discussion between Professors Wace and Huxley has drawn popular attention to the unprecedented activity of scholars in determining the authenticity, dates, and relations of the various books of the Bible.

With the increasing of these positive results, however we, in our course, have but little to do. Literature is with us an instrument of culture, and culture comes not from the results of investigation, but from the process. In the process of literary investigation, as we have seen, it is sometimes necessary for us to grasp the spirit of a nation or of an age. At other times, we must find our solution in the individual character of a writer. It may be, for example, that on comparing the works of Thucydides with those of the almost contemporary Herodotus, we should conclude that the peculiarities of the latter's history are due, not so much to the times, as to the personal character of the author himself. Thus the study of literature becomes the study of human nature under varying conditions. Its fundamental requisite is, that the student should escape from himself, his own

narrow conceptions and surroundings, that he should sympathize with, so far as to understand (for understanding postulates sympathy) men of very different character in times and countries, perhaps, remote from his, with feelings and modes of thought even more remote. In no other pursuit is he in contact with such a variety of ideas, in no other study has he to make them so thoroughly his own. He has not done with them, as the scientific student, when he ascertains that they are false; he must comprehend their genesis, and how, though false, they once seemed true, whether the explanation lies in the writer or in his age. He becomes at home and at ease among ideas, as is the man of the world among men. As those qualities which characterize the man of the world are acquired through intercourse with men of various types, and not through intercourse simply, but through being obliged to use and to manipulate them; so the analogous discipline of literature gives the analogous qualities of intellectual openness and flexibility, which in turn beget a tolerance and coolness of judgment especially characteristic of thorough culture. The student of science comes into contact with facts; interrogated nature says that a thing is so or not so. The student of literature comes into contact with ideas, moulded to the mind which formulated them, intermixed with error and modified by emotion. He is under the necessity of comprehending how the form of a conception is the result of character and surroundings. He learns to do this in books of a more or less remote past, often treating questions in which he has no immediate interest, and which he can therefore view with coolness and impartiality. Having acquired this habit of mind in a remote sphere, he is rendered capable of maintaining it in examining the burning questions of the day. Here, too, he analyzes and makes allowances. He comprehends the relativity of truth, the inevitable limitations of the human intellect, the common obliquity of mental vision which afflicts whole generations. The novelty or apparent absurdity of an idea does not repel him. He is ready to investigate the grounds of an opinion with which he does not agree, and the residuum of truth which forms the basis of most errors, will not improbably serve to render his own conceptions more just. His comprehension of his opponent's position enables him to attack it more effectively, and to hold his own more surely. Were we absolutely fixed in relation to all objects, the visible world would appear to us a flat surface. Not less necessary is it that in the intellectual world we should be capable of assuming different points of view. To the man of undisciplined mind, nothing is

more difficult. The presentation of the other side of a question causes him an uneasy feeling of insecurity and irritation. To him moral obliquity seems the necessary source of opinions differing from his own. The men in the fable who disputed about the colour of the chameleon, afford a typical example of the state of mind from which literary discipline tends to set us free. Not chameleons alone, but political questions, social questions, religious questions, present different aspects under different circumstances. Here, then, are two great results which may be expected to flow from all genuine literary training—first, openness of mind, that is, a readiness to admit ideas however strange, and to comprehend and accept whatever of truth they contain: secondly, flexibility of mind, the capacity to seize a point of view not our own, to understand other men and other times,—what, in short, we may call intellectual sympathy.

You will note that these qualities of mind are developed by the intellectual gymnastics of seizing the ideas of others, of putting ourselves at their standpoint. Hence they are results that follow from the study of everything that can be called literature, however little inherent excellence it may possess. But we have further to consider the study of literature in its narrower, higher, and perhaps more usual, sense. All presentation of thought which has maintained permanent vitality possesses a certain power, fitness, or beauty of expression; for, as thought when once expressed becomes common property, mankind naturally cares to preserve the words, not of him who expressed it first, but of him who expressed it best. In these treasured utterances we have not the mere colorless presentation of an idea, or of an objective fact; there is an additional element of form impressed by the writer, and the literary student finds here wide scope for the interpretative function. The entering completely into the thought of an author was in the case of purely objective statements, such as those of Euclid, a simple matter. In Herodotus the interest and difficulty of our task were increased by the introduction of a subjective element. And, in general, it is true that the less purely objective the thought is, and the more the author impresses on it his personality, his emotions,—sets it before us, not exactly as it is, but as it appears to him, the more does the student of literature find himself concerned with it. This subjective factor in literature makes itself generally felt through the manner, the form; and the most pervading manifestation of form is style. Style is that in the written thought which corresponds to the

personality of the writer, and is the outcome of that personality. Two narratives may, as you are well aware, affect the reader very differently, although the framework of fact in each case may be the same. The difference in effect cannot result from the matter; it arises from the manner or style; and that, in turn, comes from the attitude of the writer toward the facts, an attitude which he reproduces in his reader. As that attitude may be analyzed into two elements, the permanent element of character, and the transient element of mood; so style, reflecting the varying mood of the writer, is pathetic, or humorous, or indignant; and yet, behind all that, there is a constant element of individual characteristics which serve to distinguish one author from another, and to which we refer in speaking of the style of Demosthenes, or of Virgil, of Burke, or of Milton. "*Le style*," says the adage, "*c'est l'homme*." The genuine stylist depicts himself to the competent literary critic, with unconscious fidelity, in lineaments adequate and unmistakable,

Through style, then, we come in contact with that which is greatest in man, character, that unity of tendency and impression which springs from all his moral and intellectual forces. Those who have been fortunate enough to encounter in life a great and noble personality, know that it is the most inspiring and marvellous of spiritual forces. As the chord in one instrument responds to the vibration of its fellow in another, so the emotions of the human soul vibrate under the influence of a great and ardent character. But in the limitations of time, and space, and circumstance, by which our lives are bound, such encounters must needs be rare; and fortunate it is that through literature we are able to feel the kindling spiritual presence of the mighty dead. It is true that but few can thus transmit themselves through the ages; but these few are among the greatest spirits of our race. The power of style in the highest degree, is the prerogative of genius alone. When style in that highest degree is present, we are not merely told how the writer felt, but his feelings are communicated to us; not how he saw, but we are enabled to see as he did; not what manner of man he was, but we are introduced into his very presence. In the sphere of studies I know nothing comparable to this. History and biography tell us about men, we see them imaged in a more or less imperfect medium; but here we feel the thrill of their emotions, the power of their presence. So that, not only does literature bring us into contact with ideas, the higher literature brings us into contact with men, the choice and master spirits of all ages. Here is a society ever open to us, the best and

most desirable we can conceive, the truest aristocracy of the human race in their happiest moods, with their wisest and deepest thoughts on their lips.

It is in no figurative sense, but in sober truth, that I call this "society." From what has been said of style, it is manifest that the influence of a great work on a competent literary capacity does not differ in kind from the influence of personal contact. If somewhat is lost in vividness, many of the limitations of personal converse are absent. But if in the best literature we find, in no merely hyperbolical sense, "society," it is like all good society, difficult of access. Not much of worth in this world but is the reward of merit, of toil, of patience. The gardens of the Hesperides stood ever open, but to fetch the golden apples was the labour of a Hercules. The books are waiting on the shelves, but he is far astray indeed who thinks to win the secret of Goethe, of Shakespeare, of him—

"Who saw life steadily and saw it whole,  
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,"

in the same easy fashion in which he skims through the last popular novel, or an ephemeral essay of the periodical press. To experience the power of literature, to appreciate style in its fulness, to feel not merely the main emotion, but the whole complex of emotions with which a writer regards his subject, is the outcome only of constant and careful study, combined with a large innate susceptibility to literary art. Though the capacity for the highest literary appreciation is not common, in most men a measure of innate capability is dormant. To rouse this dormant capability, to guide it aright when roused, to teach the proper spirit in which to approach the masterpieces of literature, and to keep the mind in contact with them, this should form a main part of every course of literature; and I claim that, excluding the other benefits of college work, it would be no inadequate return, should the student gain this alone, the appreciation of what is noblest and best in books, and a love for that august company of whom we have spoken.

Style is the most pervading manifestation of form. We find it present when the literary structure is not otherwise elaborated. Thucydides's History, for example, has the simple mould of a chronicle of events narrated year after year as they occurred. Its style, however, is very marked; the character of the writer is felt throughout, and with consummate skill, he bathes such narratives as those of plague at

Athens or the Sicilian Expedition in a certain emotional atmosphere. But an author may not merely impress his character and mood upon his matter, he may shape that matter itself to the production of certain effects. Here we reach literature in its purest form,—literature which is literature first of all, not history, or science, or philosophy. In it the writer's aim is primarily artistic, the embodiment of a beautiful conception in appropriate language. Of this species, there are several varieties, but we may take poetry as the best and highest representative. The poet is in the fullest sense creative; the subjective factor reaches its maximum; and hence poetry is, in an especial degree, the subject of the student of literature. In Euclid we have, as near as may be, the colorless presentation of fact. In Thucydides the main object is still the presentation of fact, though it is coloured by emotion. Poetry, on the other hand, is differentiated from these in that the production of emotion is here the chief aim, in subordination to which the facts themselves are chosen and moulded. As by its form, then, so by its aim, poetry is the highest species of literature. For the highest manifestations of human nature are emotional. Emotion raises morality to religion. Nay more, the work of Christianity itself was to introduce the reign of emotion, to substitute for the tribunal of an unchanging code, the arbitrament of an inner and over progressive emotional state.

The stimulation of noble and pleasing emotions is the aim of the poet. But emotion cannot exist by itself; it is merely the form, the garb in which something more substantial is clothed by the mind; and this substance, in the case of all great and abiding artistic work is truth. No art, no beauty of expression can give more than a temporary hold on the minds of the race to what is fundamentally untrue. Enduring works of imagination are not fiction in the sense of being false; on the contrary, they are truer embodiments of observation and insight than the vast majority of mankind can arrive at for themselves. There is much false fiction in the world, doubtless, giving misleading ideas of men and things, enough to afford some ground to the old-fashioned prejudice against reading novels. But falsity is neither a necessary characteristic of fiction, nor a consequence of the unreality of the persons and events which works of imagination usually present. Falsity can no more be invariably attributed to what is called fiction, than truth to what is called history. Indeed, I know not if the sum total of truth contained in English fiction be not greater than the sum total of truth contained in English history. The greatest English

novelist of the last century mockingly called his works histories, and in the introductions which he prefixed to the divisions of one of them, humorously vindicates their claim to truth in comparison with works usually so denominated. And the claim is not without justification. In the eighteenth century, Fielding attempted to give a picture of English social life as it was, Hume of English political life as it had been ; beyond question Fielding's is the truer work, as time has shown it to be the more enduring. Each generation of Englishmen finds it necessary to re-write the history of England ; each generation of scholars the history of Greece and Rome ; for each sees the inadequacy of its predecessors' attempts. That inadequacy lies not in the incompetence of the writers, but in the complexity of their subject and in the insufficiency of their data. That an historian should give us in detail an absolutely true picture of the actual Brutus, on existing data, is an impossibility. But Shakespeare, like the geometrician, makes his own hypothesis. He ascribes a certain character to Brutus, and represents him as influenced by certain men and certain circumstances, so that the assassination of Cæsar is the natural and inevitable outcome. The representation is absolutely true, not as a picture of the historic Brutus,—that it is not the business of a poet to give—but of universal human nature, of how certain characters would have acted under the influence of certain surroundings. The truth of the picture comes from the poet's control over his facts, as the unvarying exactness of geometrical deductions comes from the arbitrary nature of the fundamental assumptions. In a certain sense, truth may be denied to the results of geometry, inasmuch as they have no exact correlatives in the real world ; while in another sense they possess the highest truth, and when applied to the concrete universe, as in astronomy, give results the most accurate attained by science. There is a certain analogy to this in the work of the poet. The truths of history and biography are at best particular ; to apply them to life, we must generalize them. The representations of poetry, on the other hand, have an element of universality. Shakespeare's men and women are, as Coleridge says, embodiments of the universal, individualizations of the type ; and consequently possess validity everywhere and for all time.

But it is not merely truth of the historic type,—pictures of human action and character,—that poetry presents. It presents also truths of a scientific or philosophic nature. Unlike science and philosophy, however, poetry, aiming mainly at emotion, confines itself to a certain

range of truths fitted to kindle this, and is more concerned with the manner in which they are expressed than with their novelty. Indeed they are the old fundamental truths, the patrimony of the race, intertwined with all our inherited instincts, that poetry treats by preference; for these are most deeply rooted in our emotional nature. Novel truths, on the other hand, it rather shuns: the intellectual effort in grasping them, and the lack of unquestioned certainty which attends them, are fatal to emotional absorption. The novelty of poetry therefore lies in its form, rather than in its material. Poetry owes its power to its manner, in virtue of which it transmutes dead terms apprehended by the intellect only, into living convictions grasped by the whole moral nature, which vibrates responsive to them. The difference is illustrated by the analogous contrast in the sphere of religion, between the cold assent of reason and the warm embrace of faith. Accordingly, the difference between the poetic and scientific presentation of truth, though merely one of manner, is immeasurably great. To give a glimpse of this, allow me to present an example or two of the same facts stated scientifically and poetically. In a scientific work, you might perhaps find some such statement as this: "The extinction of man and of all that he has produced is assured by the action of certain forces on the terrestrial globe, which must ultimately result in the destruction of that body and its return to its primitive nebulous condition." Shakespeare expresses the same idea:

"And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And like this insubstantial pageant faded  
Leave not a wretched behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep."

Again in the closing chapter of the First Book of Samuel, we find an historic statement of certain facts:

"Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons: and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons," and so forth.

In the following chapter this narrative is fused into form and beauty by the glowing emotion and imagination of the poet David:

"And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the

Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be any rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

Thus in poetry we do not stand outside the thoughts and characters presented, we enter into them; not merely the range of our knowledge is widened, but the range of our experience, through that sympathy with emotion which it is the essence of poetry to kindle. To us in the somewhat narrowing conditions of our daily lives, such stimulus and expansion are especially necessary. Our surroundings and education are wont to leave neglected the aesthetic side of our nature, and except in literature, we have scarcely any means for its cultivation. In this land, the young and ardent spirit cannot find food for ideal inspiration in the masterpieces of Phidias, or of Praxiteles, of Raphael, or of Titian. Our College towns are not Oxfords; nor can we feel the serene and majestic calm which clings about the Cathedrals of England and Normandy, or the towers and basilicas of Tuscany. In our native Province we grow to manhood untouched by, and for the most part, ignorant of, the educating power of plastic art. Perhaps the very building in which we stand, has been the first to waken in us that elevating sense of beauty and repose which architecture can give. The more need then, in the dearth of other means of aesthetic culture, that we should have recourse to literature, which is fortunately, at once, the widest, most efficient, and most easily appreciated of artistic forces. Our aesthetic sensibilities form a part of our own nature which liberal culture can by no means afford to overlook. On the individual or nation which neglects or represses them, they exact vengeance in narrowness of intellect or morals. The world's history has more than once shown, that when the higher emotions are stifled, the lower assert themselves, and plunge society into an orgie of sensuality, such as followed the iron rule of Puritanism in England. And not merely for itself is beautiful emotion desirable. Aristotle, long ago, noted its purifying effects on the mind. It cannot, of course, be denied that aesthetic sensibility may co-exist with weak moral character, and that fine feeling does not necessarily lead to noble action; yet its general elevating tendency is none the less real. The soul vibrating in sympathy with the

great deeds and lofty character, the soul touched with the sense of human sorrow and human guilt, whether in nature or art can, for the time at least, find no pleasure in anything that is ignoble or degrading. And if the study of poetry is an emotional discipline and a moral force, it is no less an intellectual discipline and practical aid. "The highest poetry," Matthew Arnold says, "is at bottom a criticism of life, and the greatness of a poet lies in the beautiful and powerful application of ideas to life, to the question—how to live." It is the business of science to attain truth, of poetry, to seize that truth in as far as it is applicable to life, and to give it perfect expression. Hence Wordsworth has called poetry "the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all science;" and again, "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." It is in virtue of this side of his work that the poet is a philosopher and comes to the assistance of the thoughtful spirit craving an answer to the great problems of life. Philosophy or metaphysics attempts to solve these, but studies so profound and technical require special intellectual endowments, and must ever remain the sphere of the few. Yet any solution to which the unaided individual can attain, will inevitably be narrow and eccentric. It must be broadened from every source at command; and not least, in literature is to be found a treasure-house of aid—suggestions, the more stimulating that they are but suggestions; partial solutions the more enduring that they are but partial, and sometimes when we least expect it, a complete philosophy implicit. So that in poetry we find not only a fountain of beauty, whence we may drain perpetual draughts of joy, but a store-house of wisdom, whence we may draw treasures new and old, and arm ourselves with weapons for the battle of life.

Thus far we have considered the results—the discipline, the knowledge, the enjoyment—which we are to look for in the study of literature. It remains that I indicate succinctly the method by which these results are to be attained. It has been made sufficiently evident, in the previous part of this address, that our studies must primarily and chiefly have to do with the great works of literature themselves, not with facts about them or their authors, nor with the judgment of critics concerning them. If we wish to cultivate our musical taste, we must hear good music; if we wish to understand and enjoy painting and sculpture, we must see good painting and sculpture. And it is both logical and natural to acquire some interest in, and acquaintance with literature, before we enter the history of literature. Yet it is no

uncommon practice, in the teaching of this subject, to begin with the names, dates, and authors of books of which the student has perhaps not read a word, and in which consequently, he has no intelligent interest. He is made to recite glibly criticisms of whose justice he can form no possible judgment, lacking the first of all requirements, acquaintance with their object. On the other hand, if we follow the natural method we cannot be wrong; and it is a fact that men of aptitude for learning all acquire their love and knowledge of literature in the same way. They become interested in certain books; then their curiosity is awakened with regard to the authors, and the circumstances amidst which the books were produced. They are led from the study of particular works to the study of writers, and periods, *i.e.*, to the history of literature. The development of interest and understanding, however, is the earlier, the more difficult, and by far the more important task. If a teacher is successful in making a student conscious in some adequate measure of the excellence of a single great work—*Hamlet*, or *Lycidas*, or *Waverley*, or *Tintern Abbey*, he has done infinitely more for that student than if he had made him a complete encyclopaedia of the facts with regard to all books in the English language from Cædmon to Tennyson. The man who has, in any adequate measure, been made sensible of the beauty and power of any great work, has had the love of literature kindled in him, and has learnt the secret of literary interpretation.

It is at this stage,--when we have the works before us,—that we can first make profitable use of the criticisms of others. Such criticisms are not dogmas to be adopted, but helps to the directing of our own eyes, and the awakening of deeper insight into that which we have already read. In making use of critical helps we should, however, be on our guard against the common error of losing sight of the whole in the study of the parts. Too often the main end—the enjoyment and comprehension of a great work, is lost sight of in the excessive explanation of phrases and allusions. It is of course essential to accurate scholarship and honest thinking that the meaning of each word and phrase as used by the author should be understood. It is not, however, essential that the history and etymology of a word should be explained, except in so far as light is thereby thrown on the use of the word in the passage under consideration. When the student comes to the Miltonic line :

“Who left untold  
The story of Cambusean Bold”

it is proper that he should know that it was Chaucer who did this, and that the circumstances of the story being untold should be explained. It is out of place and distracting that he should have foisted upon him an outline of Chaucer's life and works, and a discussion of Cambuscan, mythical and real. I have heard that a professor of English, when asked for counsel by a student as to his reading during the vacation, recommended that he should read Macaulay's Essays making himself fully acquainted, as he went along, with every person, place, or thing mentioned. The suggestion as to reading Macaulay may have been excellent; but think of the proper names and allusions scattered so thickly over his Essays and judge, not how many essays but how many paragraphs the student would have mastered. At the close of the summer, instead of knowing anything of Macaulay, or the subject of an essay, he would have crammed into his brain a farrago of miscellaneous, ill-digested, superficial information. Even this information could not, in most cases, be lasting. The mature mind prefers that its facts and ideas should be acquired in large masses of logically connected material. The miscellaneous knowledge obtained in notes remains in the student's mind till the examination is past, and then for the most part gradually evaporates.

Having warned you against this Scylla of literary study, let me caution you, on the other hand, against the Charybdis of slovenliness and inaccuracy. The student of literature, perhaps more than others, is tempted to dilettanteism, too apt to be satisfied with a species of passive enjoyment, prone to overlook the claims of accuracy and thoroughness. Experience in my own case, and observation in that of others, has taught me that it is a great mistake to study in a subject just what we care for and what is pleasant to us. Thoroughness and completeness lend interest in time to the driest subjects, but slovenliness and self-pleasing are fatal to it. We owe a debt of gratitude to examinations, much as it is the fashion to abuse them, for the safeguards they erect against this kind of study. Remember that we, inside the University, are scholars, not amateurs, and thoroughness is the first characteristic of the true scholar.

The enjoyment and understanding of literature—the fundamental requisite of the literary student—has accidentally originated in various men through the perusal of very different books, as tastes and circumstances may have determined. In college classes, where individual preference cannot be consulted, and where students have attained

considerable maturity, I believe that in the dramas of Shakespeare we find the best instruments for awakening genuine literary taste, and for the disciplining of that which has been already awakened. The works of Shakespeare are to be preferred, not merely on account of their surpassing greatness, but also because we find in them a breadth of knowledge and sympathy which gives points of contact and interest for men of the most diverse capacities and temperaments. Other writers appeal to a more or less narrow circle, Shakespeare to all men. There are men, not merely of intellectual ability, but of considerable literary ability, to whom Wordsworth is a sealed book. One is blind to the excellence of Pope, another to that of Spenser. Even a man of Matthew Arnold's pre-eminent literary insight fails to do justice to Shelley. But if a student has any aptitude for literature whatever, and even if he has none, he may usually be made to perceive on some side the greatness of Shakespeare; so multitudinous and striking are the excellencies of that most human and universal of writers. Having acquired some insight into Shakespeare, we ought in some way to make an accurate study of, and learn to enjoy a considerable number of our greatest and most typical English writers. The more diverse these are in genius, the more complete and adequate will the student's training and culture be.

But our University studies must not stop here. This is merely the first, though the most important and most difficult, stage. When we have read a book with interest, when it has been a source of keen enjoyment and stimulus, when it has widened our horizon, we then naturally wish to know something of its author and the circumstances of its production. This, indeed, as I explained at the opening, is a necessary factor in the complete understanding of a book. We are thus led from the study of single works to the study of writers,—from books to men.<sup>11</sup> But again, we find it is not sufficient merely to master a man's collective writings and the details of his life. To complete our understanding of the work, or our conception of the writer, we must know something of the intellectual atmosphere which surrounded him, of the currents of thought, and of the spirit of his time. In doing this, we pass from the study of the individual writer to the study of the period in which he lived—to the history of literature. Arrived at this stage, we find that books and authors, possessing but little in themselves to merit our attention, have now, as links in the chain of literary development, a new interest and importance through their influence upon greater writers, and through the insight which they afford into the

current thought of the age. Thus, starting from single authors, with a desire of fully understanding their works, and of forming a complete and true likeness of them as men, we find a new conception and a new aim dawning upon us—the conception of the solidarity of literature, the aim of forming a complete image of the thought of an age in all its manifold relations. As a writer unconsciously reveals himself in his work, so a nation, at each epoch of its history, reveals itself in its collective literary products. As one's knowledge and insight deepen, all books, all writers assume their proper places in the picture; great currents of thought, obscure streams of influence, the manifold relations of thinkers, the action and reaction of thought become manifest, and the whole adjusts itself in fitting perspective. But this picture is still incomplete unless we follow backward and forward the lines of development, and see the passing phenomena in their relation to their antecedents and their results. We thus arrive at our final task, as students of English literature at least—the task of tracing out and imaging the development of national thought from the time when it first emerges from the obscurity of an illiterate and prehistoric past, to its culmination in the multitudinous streams of literary activity amidst which we ourselves live.

You see, then, in brief what practical course we ought to take. First, we awaken and discipline literary taste by the study of individual works. Next, this taste should be widened by a thorough knowledge of the best works of the greatest writers. Thirdly, we must make the literature of a period our subject, study minutely its leading works, familiarize ourselves with its chief writers by reading, to some extent, their less important works also, and widen our knowledge of the literature of the period by a course of reading among secondary authors. It is impossible and undesirable, however, that the ordinary student should spend much time on books which have merely an historical interest. So that, at this point in his course, he may profitably make use of abstracts and criticisms of books which he himself has not been able to read. These facts and opinions have now a genuine interest for him, through the relations which minor work bear to the general course of literary development. Thus, having mastered the literature of one or two periods, and knowing something of the great literature of all periods, it would be well, in the fourth place, (if time precludes such detailed examination of the whole of English Literature,) that the student should have put before him a brief sketch of the entire development of our literature, so that all

that he has learned, or will learn, may fall into its fitting place in the scheme of the whole.

I have thus completed a brief exposition of the main results which may be expected to spring from the study of literature, and a still briefer indication of the proper method of attaining them. If in urging its importance, I have maintained its superiority in some respects to other subjects, it is in no spirit of disparagement to these, for I well know that they in their turn afford a discipline which literature cannot give. The place I claim for literature among her sister studies is a high one, and can be filled by none of them; but culture is broader than literature, and as the curriculum of this University indicates, a truly liberal culture must be many sided. Again, I have represented the results of literary study in their highest manifestations, have set up an ideal towards which we must strive. But the laws of the universe are mostly realized in tendencies, and if our studies only *tend* to bring about the results indicated we must not be discouraged but work patiently towards a more perfect realization. Nor have I urged the cause of literature in any narrow sense. What I have said is applicable, not merely to English Literature but to all literature. Especially do I acknowledge here the claims of classical literature, which seems to me, if pursued in a proper spirit, especially fitted to produce that openness and flexibility of mind and soundness of judgment of which I spoke in the earlier part of this lecture. Valuable above all is the literature of Greece, whether we regard its variety, its perfection of form, its wealth of ideas, its unique development, or its abiding force in moulding the thought of Western Europe. On the other hand, the various modern literatures are much more quickly and easily accessible, and come nearer to us in thought and feeling. According to taste and temperament, one student will feel himself attracted to that of Germany, another to that of France, or of Italy. But after all, the wide, varied and splendid literature open to all of us in our mother tongue, is a sufficient instrument of literary culture, and from it at any rate we must begin. Literary taste and love of books must be developed there. None of us will be disposed, I think, to differ from Professor Huxley when he gives utterance to the remark with which I will close: "If an Englishman cannot get literary culture out of his Bible, his Shakespeare, his Milton, neither will the profoundest study of Homer and Sophocles, Virgil and Horace give it to him."

# TENNYSON.

## THE POET

The poet in a golden clime was born,  
With golden stars above ;  
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,  
The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,

5

He saw thro' his own soul.

The marvel of the everlasting will,  
An open scroll,

Before him lay : with echoing feet he threaded  
The secretest walks of fame :

10

The viewless arrows of his thoughts were headed  
And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver tongue,  
And of so fierce a flight,

From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,  
15 Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore  
Them earthward till they lit ;

20

Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field flower,

The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth anew  
Where'er they fell, behold,

Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew  
A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling  
The winged shafts of truth,

25

To throng with stately blooms the breathing spring  
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with beams,  
    Tho' one did fling the fire.

30

Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many dreams  
    Of high desire.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world  
    Like one great garden show'd,  
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd  
    Rare sunrise flow'd.

35

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise  
    Her beautiful bold brow,  
When rites and forms before his burning eyes  
    Melted like snow.

40

There was no blood upon her maiden robes  
    Sunn'd by those orient skies ;  
But round about the circles of the globes  
    Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was trac'd in flame  
    WISDOM, a name to shake  
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.  
    And when she spake,

45

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,  
    And as the lightning to the thunder  
Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,  
    Making earth wonder,

50

So was their meaning to her words. No sword  
    Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,  
But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his* word  
    She shook the world.

55





*Delphic Sibyl, by Michael Angelo*

To face p. 3.

## THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

## PART I.

On either side the river lie  
 Long fields of barley and of rye,  
 That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;  
 And thro' the field the road runs by

To many-tower'd Camelot ;

And up and down the people go,  
 Gazing where the lilies blow  
 Round an island there below,  
 The island of Shalott.

5

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,  
 Little breezes dusk and shiver  
 Thro' the wave that runs for ever  
 By the island in the river  
 Flowing down to Camelot.

10

Four gray walls, and four gray towers,  
 Overlook a space of flowers,  
 And the silent isle imbowers  
 The Lady of Shalott.

15

By the margin, willow-veil'd,  
 Slide the heavy barges trail'd  
 By slow horses ; and unhail'd  
 The shallop fitteth silken-sail'd  
 Skimming down to Camelot ;  
 But who hath seen her wave her hand ?  
 Or at the casement seen her stand ?  
 Or is she known in all the land,  
 The Lady of Shalott ?

20

25

Only reapers, reaping early  
 In among the bearded barley,  
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly  
 From the river winding clearly, 30  
     Down to tower'd Camelot :  
 And by the moon the reaper weary,  
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,  
 Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy  
     Lady of Shalott.' 35

## PART II.

There she weaves by night and day  
 A magic web with colours gay.  
 She has heard a whisper say,  
 A curse is on her if she stay 40  
     To look down to Camelot.  
 She knows not what the curse may be,  
 And so she weaveth steadily,  
 And little other care hath she,  
     The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear  
 That hangs before her all the year,  
 Shadows of the world appear.  
 There she sees the highway near  
     Winding down to Camelot : 50  
 There the river eddy whirls,  
 And there the surly village-churls,  
 And the red cloaks of market girls,  
     Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,  
 An abbot on an ambling pad,  
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad, 55

Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,  
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot ;  
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue  
 The knights come riding two and two :  
 She hath no loyal knight and true,  
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
 To weave the mirror's magic sights,  
 For often thro' the silent nights  
 A funeral, with plumes and lights  
 And music, went to Camelot :  
 Or when the moon was overhead,  
 Came two young lovers lately wed ;  
 'I am half sick of shadows,' said  
 The Lady of Shalott.

## PART III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
 He rode between the barley-sheaves,  
 The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,  
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves  
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
 A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd  
 To a lady in his shield,  
 That sparkled on the yellow field,  
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,  
 Like to some branch of stars we see  
 Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
 The bridle bells rang merrily  
 As he rode down to Camelot :

60

65

70

75

80

85

And from his blazon'd baldric slung  
 A mighty silver bugle hung,  
 And as he rode his armour rung,  
 Beside remote Shalott.

90

All in the blue unclouded weather  
 Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,  
 The helmet and the helmet-feather  
 Burn'd like one burning flame together,

As he rode down to Camelot.

95

As often thro' the purple night,  
 Below the starry clusters bright,  
 Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ;  
 On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;  
 From underneath his helmet flow'd  
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,

As he rode down to Camelot.

100

From the bank and from the river  
 He flash'd into the crystal mirror,  
 'Tirra lirra,' by the river  
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

105

She left the web, she left the loom,  
 She made three paces thro' the room,  
 She saw the water-lily bloom,  
 She saw the helmet and the plume,

She look'd down to Camelot.

110

Out flew the web and floated wide ;  
 The mirror crack'd from side to side ;  
 'The curse is come upon me,' cried  
 The Lady of Shalott.

115

## PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,  
 The pale yellow woods were waning,  
 The broad stream in his banks complaining, 120  
 Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot ;

Down she came and found a boat

Beneath a willow left afloat,

And round about the prow she wrote

125

*The Lady of Shalott.*

And down the river's dim expanse  
 Like some bold seer in a trance,  
 Seeing all his own mischance—  
 With a glassy countenance

130

Did she look to Camelot.

And at the closing of the day

She loosed the chain and down she lay ;

The broad stream bore her far away,

The Lady of Shalott.

135

Lying, robed in snowy white  
 That loosely flew to left and right—  
 The leaves upon her falling light—  
 Thro' the noises of the night

She floated down to Camelot :

140

And as the boat-head wound along

The willowy hills and fields among,

They heard her singing her last song,

The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,

145

Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,

Till her blood was frozen slowly,

And her eyes were darken'd wholly,  
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.

For ere she reach'd upon the tide  
The first house by the water-side,  
Singing in her song she died,  
The Lady of Shalott.

150

Under tower and balcony,  
By garden-wall and gallery,  
A gleaming shape she floated by,  
Dead-pale between the houses high,  
Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,  
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,  
And round the prow they read her name,  
*The Lady of Shalott.*

155

160

Who is this? and what is here?  
And in the lighted palace near  
Died the sound of royal cheer;  
And they crossed themselves for fear,  
All the knights at Camelot:  
But Lancelot mused a little space;  
He said, 'She has a lovely face;  
God in his mercy lend her grace,  
*The Lady of Shalott.'*

165

170



## ŒNONE.

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier  
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.  
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,  
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,  
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand  
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down  
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars  
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine  
In cataract after cataract to the sea. 5

Behind the valley topmost Garganus  
Stands up and takes the morning : but in front  
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal  
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,  
The crown of Troas. 10

Hither came at noon  
Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn  
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.  
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck  
Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.  
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine, 15  
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade  
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

‘ O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
For now the noon-day quiet holds the hill : 25  
The grasshopper is silent in the grass :  
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,  
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.  
The purple flower droops : the golden bee  
Is lily-cradled : I alone awake. 30

My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,  
 My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,  
 And I am all aweary of my life.

‘ O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,  
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die. 35  
 Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves  
 That house the cold crown’d snake ! O mountain brooks,  
 I am the daughter of a River-God,  
 Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all  
 My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls 40  
 Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,  
 A cloud that gather’d shape : for it may be  
 That, while I speak of it, a little while  
 My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

‘ O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,  
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 I waited underneath the dawning hills,  
 Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,  
 And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine :  
 Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris, 50  
 Leading a jet-black goat white-horn’d, white-hooved,  
 Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

‘ O mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 Far-off the torrent call’d me from the cleft :  
 Far up the solitary morning smote 55  
 The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes  
 I sat alone : white-breasted like a star  
 Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard skin  
 Droop’d from his shoulder, but his sunny hair  
 Cluster’d about his temples like a God’s : 60  
 And his cheek brighten’d as the foam-bow brightens  
 When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart  
 Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm  
 Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,  
 That smelt ambrosially, and while I look’d  
 And listen’d, the full-flowing river of speech  
 Came down upon my heart.

65

‘ “ My own C<sup>Æ</sup>none,  
 Beautiful-brow’d C<sup>Æ</sup>none, my own soul,  
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrat’v’n  
 ‘ For the most fair,’ would seem to award it thine,  
 As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt  
 The knolis of Ida, loveliest in all grace  
 Of movement, and the charm of married brows.”

70

75

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,  
 And added “ This was cast upon the board,  
 When all the full-faced presence of the Gods  
 Ranged in the halls of Peleus ; whereupon  
 Rose feud, with question unto whom ’twere due :  
 But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,  
 Delivering, that to me, by common voice  
 Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,  
 Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each  
 This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave  
 Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,  
 Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard  
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.”

80

85

90

‘ Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 It was the deep midnoon : one silvery cloud  
 Had lost his way between the piney sides  
 Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,  
 Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,  
 And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,

95

Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,  
 Lotus and lilies : and a wind arose,  
 And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,  
 This way and that, in many a wild festoon 100  
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs  
 With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,  
 And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd 105  
 Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.  
 Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom  
 Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows  
 Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods  
 Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made 110  
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule  
 Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue  
 Wherewith to embellish state, “from many a vale  
 And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,  
 Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore. 115  
 Honour,” she said, “and homage, tax and toll,  
 From many an inland town and haven large,  
 Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel  
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers.”

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die. 120  
 Still she spake on and still she spake of power,  
 “ Which in all action is the end of all ;  
 Power fitted to the season ; wisdom-bred  
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns  
 Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand 125  
 Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,  
 From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,  
 A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,  
 Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power

Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd  
Rest in a happy place, and quiet seats  
Above the thunder, with undying bliss  
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

130

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit  
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power  
Flatter'd his spirit ; but Pallas where she stood  
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs  
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear  
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,  
The while, above, her full and earnest eye  
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek  
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

135

' "Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.  
Yet not for power (power of herself  
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear ;  
And, because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

145

' Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
Again she said : " I woo thee not with gifts.  
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me  
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,  
So shalt thou find me fairest.

150

Yet, indeed,  
If gazing on divinity disrobed  
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,  
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure  
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,  
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,

155

160

Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,  
 To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,  
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow  
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,  
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,  
 Commeasure perfect freedom."

165

‘Here she ceas'd,  
 And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, “O Paris,  
 Give it to Pallas!” but he heard me not,  
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

170

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,  
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 Idalian Aphroditè beautiful,  
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,  
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew  
 From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair  
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat  
 And shoulder: from the violets her light foot  
 Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form  
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches  
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

175

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.  
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,  
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh,  
 Half-whisper'd in his ear, “I promise thee  
 The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,”  
 She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:  
 But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,  
 And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,  
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,  
 And I was left alone within the bower;  
 And from that time to this I am alone,  
 And I shall be alone until I die.

180

185

190

‘ Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die. 195  
 Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?  
 My love bath told me so a thousand times.  
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,  
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,  
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail 200  
 Crouch’d fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?  
 Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms  
 Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest  
 Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew  
 Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains 205  
 Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 They came, they cut away my tallest pines,  
 My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge  
 High over the blue gorge, and all between 210  
 The snowy peak and snow-white cataract  
 Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath  
 Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn  
 The panther’s roar came muffled, while I sat  
 Low in the valley. Never, never more 215  
 Shall lone Oenone see the morning mist  
 Sweep thro’ them; never see them over-laid  
 With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,  
 Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

‘ O mother, hear me yet before I die. 220  
 I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,  
 Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,  
 Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her  
 The Abominable, that uninvited came  
 Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall, 225  
 And cast the golden fruit upon the board,

And bred this change ; that I might speak my mind,  
 And tell her to her face how much I hate  
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die. 230  
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,  
 In this green valley, under this green hill,  
 Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this stone ?  
 Seal’d it with kisses ? water’d it with tears ?  
 O happy tears, and how unlike to these ! 235  
 O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face ?  
 O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight ?  
 O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,  
 There are enough unhappy on this earth,  
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live : 240  
 I pray thee, pass before my light of life,  
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.  
 Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,  
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids : let me die.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die. 245  
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts  
 Do shape themselves within me, more and more,  
 Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear  
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,  
 Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see 250  
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother  
 Conjectures of the features of her child  
 Ere it is born : her child ! — a shudder comes  
 Across me : never child be born of me,  
 Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes ! 255

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
 Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,  
 Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me

Walking the cold and starless road of Death  
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love 260  
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go  
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth  
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says  
A fire dances before her, and a sound  
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.  
What this may be I know not, but I know  
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,  
All earth and air seem only burning fire.<sup>2</sup>

---

## THE EPIC.

At Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve,—  
 The game of forfeits done—the girls all kiss'd  
 Beneath the sacred bush and past away—  
 The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,  
 The host, and I sat round the wassail-bowl, 5  
 Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held a talk,  
 How all the old honour had from Christmas gone,  
 Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games  
 In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired out  
 With cutting eights that day upon the pond, 10  
 Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,  
 I bump'd the ice into three several stars,  
 Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard  
 The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,  
 Now harping on the church-commissioners, 15  
 Now hawking at Geology and schism ;  
 Until I woke, and found him settled down  
 Upon the general decay of faith  
 Right thro' the world, 'at home was little left,  
 And none abroad : there was no anchor, none, 20  
 To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt his hand  
 On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by him.'  
 'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-bowl.'  
 'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift that way  
 At college : but another which you had, 25  
 I mean of verse (for so we held it then),  
 What came of that?' 'You know,' said Frank, 'he burnt  
 His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books'—  
 And then to me demanding why? 'Oh, sir,  
 He thought that nothing new was said, or else 30  
 Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth

Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :  
 God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.  
 It pleased *me* well enough.' 'Nay, nay,' said Hall,  
 'Why take the style of those heroic times ?' 35  
 For nature brings not back the Mastodon,  
 Nor we those times ; and why should any man  
 Remodel models ? these twelve books of mine  
 Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth,  
 Mere chaff and draf<sup>f</sup>, much better burnt.' 'But I,' 40  
 Said Francis, 'pick'd the eleventh from this hearth  
 And have it : keep a thing, its use will come.  
 I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes.'  
 He laugh'd, and I, tho' sleepy, like a horse  
 That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my ears ; 45  
 For I remember'd Everard's college fame  
 When we were Freshmen : then at my request  
 He brought it ; and the poet little urged,  
 But with some prelude of disparagement,  
 Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes, 50  
 Deep-chested music, and to this result.

---

 MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd  
 Among the mountains by the winter sea ;  
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,  
 Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,  
 King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep, 5  
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,  
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,

That stood on a dark strait of barren land.  
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

10

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :  
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all  
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights  
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep  
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we  
Shall never more, at any future time,  
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,  
Walking about the gardens and the halls  
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.  
I perish by this people which I made.—  
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again  
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,  
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm  
That without help I cannot last till morn.  
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how  
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm  
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across  
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :  
And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
In aftertime, this also shall be known :  
But now delay not : take Excalibur,  
And fling him far into the middle mere :  
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

15

20

25

30

35

40

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :  
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,  
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.  
A little thing may harm a wounded man.  
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,

Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45  
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
 Shriill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down  
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock, 50  
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,  
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth  
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt : 55  
 For all the hilt twinkled with diamond sparks,  
 Myriads of topaz lights, and jacinth-work  
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long  
 That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,  
 This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60  
 In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd  
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd  
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,  
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.  
 So stride he back slow to the wounded King. 65

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :  
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?  
 What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :  
 'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, 70  
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :  
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,  
 Not rendering true answer, as I seen'd  
 Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight : 75  
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,  
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.  
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again  
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing  
 I bid thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

80

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
 Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,  
 Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;  
 But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,  
 How curiously and strangely chased, he smote  
 His palms together, and he cried aloud,

85

‘ And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
 Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
 Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,  
 Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.  
 What good should follow this, if this were done ?  
 What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,  
 Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.

90

Were it well to obey then, if a king demand  
 An act unprofitable, against himself ?  
 The King is sick, and knows not what he does.  
 What record, or what relic of my lord  
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath  
 And rumours of a doubt ? but were this kept,  
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,  
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,  
 Saying, “ King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,  
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.

95

100

Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps  
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills.”  
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime  
 To all the people, winning reverence.  
 But now much honour and much fame were lost.’

105

110

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,  
 And hid Excalibur the second time,

**And so strode back slow to the wounded King.**

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :  
 'What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere : 115

'I heard the water lapping on the crag,

**And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'**

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :

'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,  
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me ! 120

**Authority forgets a dying king,**

**Laid widow'd of the power in his eye**

That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,

In whom should meet the offices of all, 125

Thou wouldest betray me for the precious hilt ;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl

Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.

Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,

And the third time may prosper, get thee hence : 130

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,

**I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'**

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged

Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword, 135

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,

Seen where the moving isles of winter shock 140

By night, with noises of the northern sea.

So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :

But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 145

Three times, and drew him under in the mere.  
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :  
' Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.  
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?' 150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :  
' Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems  
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,  
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,  
So great a miracle as yonder hilt. 155

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;  
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 160  
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :  
' My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.  
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,  
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear 165  
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,  
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 170  
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,  
And would have spoken, but he found not words,  
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,  
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,  
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs. 175

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,  
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,  
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, ' Quick, quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die.' 180

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,  
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,  
Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
Before. His own thought drove him, like a mad. 185

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves  
And barren chasms, and all to left and right  
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based  
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels— 190

And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,  
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
Beneath them; and descending they were ware 195

That all the decks were dense with stately forms  
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these  
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose  
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,

And, as it were one voice an agony 200  
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills  
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,  
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'  
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens 205  
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.  
But she, that rose the tallest of them all  
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,  
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,  
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210

And dropping bitter tears against his brow  
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white  
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;  
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215  
 Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls--  
 That made his forehead like a rising sun  
 High from the dais-throne--were parch'd with dust ;  
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,  
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220  
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;  
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,  
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged  
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,  
 ' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?  
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?  
 For now I see the true old times are dead,  
 When every morning brought a noble chance, 230  
 And every chance brought out a noble knight.  
 Such times have been not since the light that led  
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.  
 But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved  
 Which was an image of the mighty world ; 235  
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
 And the days darken round me, and the years,  
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :  
 ' The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240  
 And God fultils Himself in many ways,  
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
 Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?  
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
 May He within Himself make pure ! but thou, 245  
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.

For what are men better than sheep or goats 250

That nourish a blind life within the brain,

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way

Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 255

But now farewell. I am going a long way

With these thou seest--if indeed I go--

(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)

To the island-valley of Avilion ;

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260

Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies

Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns

And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,

Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail

265

Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,

Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood

With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere

Revolving many memories, till the hull

270

Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,

And on the mere the wailing died away.

---

Here ended Hall, and our last light, that long  
Had wink'd and threaten'd darkness, flared and fell :

At which the Parson, sent to sleep with sound,

275

And waked with silence, grunted 'Good !' but we

Sat rapt : it was the tone with which he read --

Perhaps some modern touches here and there

Redeem'd it from the charge of nothingness --

Or else we loved the man, and prized his work ; 280  
 I know not : but we sitting, as I said,  
 The cock crew loud ; as at that time of year  
 The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn :  
 Then Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,  
 'There now—that's nothing!' drew a little back, 285  
 And drove his heel into the smoulder'd log,  
 That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue ;  
 And so to bed ; where yet in sleep I seem'd  
 To sail with Arthur under looming shores,  
 Point after point ; till on to dawn, when dreams 290  
 Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,  
 To me, methought, who waited with a crowd,  
 There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore  
 King Arthur, like a modern gentleman  
 Of stateliest port ; and all the people cried, 295  
 'Arthur is come again : he cannot die.'  
 Then those that stood upon the hills behind  
 Repeated—'Come again, and thrice as fair ;'  
 And, further inland, voices echo'd—'Come  
 With all good things, and war shall be no more.' 300  
 At this a hundred bells began to peal,  
 That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed  
 The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas-morn.

---

## ST. AGNES' EVE

Deep on the convent-roof the snows  
 Are sparkling to the moon :  
 My breath to heaven like vapour goes :  
 May my soul follow soon !  
 The shadows of the convent-towers      5  
 Slant down the snowy sward,  
 Still creeping with the creeping hours  
 That lead me to my Lord :  
 Make Thou my spirit pure and clear  
 As are the frosty skies,      10  
 Or this first snowdrop of the year  
 That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are so'l'd and dark,  
 To yonder shining ground ;  
 As this pale taper's earthly spark,      15  
 To yonder argent round ;  
 So shows my soul before the Lamb,  
 My spirit before Thee ;  
 So in mine earthly house I am,  
 To that I hope to be.      20

Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,  
 Thro' all yon starlight keen,  
 Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,  
 In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors ;      25  
 The flashes come and go ;  
 All heaven bursts her starry floors,  
 And strows her lights below,  
 And deepens on and up ! the gates  
 Roll back, and far within      30

For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,  
 To make me pure of sin,  
 The sabbaths of Eternity,  
 One sabbath deep and wide—  
 A light upon the shining sea—  
 The Bridegroom with his bride !

35

“BREAK, BREAK, BREAK”

Break, break, break,  
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !  
 And I would that my tongue could utter  
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman’s boy,  
 That he shouts with his sister at play !  
 O well for the sailor lad,  
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

5

And the stately ships go on  
 To their haven under the hill ;  
 But O for the touch of a vanish’d hand,  
 And the sound of a voice that is still !

10

Break, break, break,  
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !  
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
 Will never come back to me.

15

THE VOYAGE

I.

We left behind the painted buoy  
 That tosses at the harbour-mouth ;  
 And madly danced our hearts with joy,  
 As fast we fleeted to the South :

How fresh was every sight and sound  
On open main or winding shore !  
We knew the merry world was round,  
And we might sail for evermore.

## II.

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,  
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail :  
The Lady's-head upon the prow  
Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the gale.  
The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,  
And swept behind ; so quick the run,  
We felt the good ship shake and reel,  
We seem'd to sail into the Sun !

## III.

How oft we saw the Sun retire,  
And burn the threshold of the night,  
Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,  
And sleep beneath his pillar'd light !  
How oft the purple-skirted robe  
Of twilight slowly downward drawn,  
As thro' the slumber of the globe  
Again we dash'd into the dawn !

## IV.

New stars all night above the brim  
Of waters lighten'd into view ;  
They climb'd as quickly, for the rim  
Changed every moment as we flew.  
Far ran the naked moon across  
The houseless ocean's heaving field,  
Or flying shone, the silver boss  
Of her own halo's dusky shield ;

5

10

15

20

25

30

## V.

The peaky islet shifted shapes,  
High towns on hills were dimly seen,  
We past long lines of Northern capes 35  
And dewy Northern meadows green.  
We came to warmer waves, and deep  
Across the boundless east we drove.  
Where those long swells of breaker sweep  
The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove. 40

## VI.

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,  
Gloom'd the low coast and quivering brine  
With ashy rains, that spreading made  
Fantastic plume or sable pine ;  
By sands and steaming flats, and floods 45  
Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,  
And hills and scarlet-mingled woods  
Glow'd for a moment as we past.

## VII.

O hundred shores of happy climes,  
How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark ! 50  
At times the whole sea burn'd, at times  
With wakes of fire we tore the dark ;  
At times a carven craft would shoot  
From havens hid in fairy bowers,  
With naked limbs and flowers and fruit, 55  
But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

## VIII.

For one fair Vision ever fled  
Down the waste waters day and night,  
And still we follow'd where she led,  
In hope to gain upon her flight. 60

Her face was evermore unseen,  
 And fixt upon the far sea-line ;  
 But each man murmur'd, 'O my Queen,  
 I follow till I make thee mine.'

## IX.

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd 65  
 Like Fancy made of golden air,  
 Now nearer to the prow she seem'd  
 Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,  
 Now high on waves that idly burst  
 Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the sea, 70  
 And now, the bloodless point reversed,  
 She bore the blade of Liberty.

## X.

And only one among us—him  
 We pleased not—he was seldom pleased :  
 He saw not far: his eyes were dim : 75  
 But ours he swore were all diseased.  
 'A ship of fools,' he shriek'd in spite,  
 'A ship of fools,' he sneer'd and wept.  
 And overboard one stormy night  
 He cast his body, and on we swept. 80

## XI.

And never sail of ours was furl'd,  
 Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn ;  
 We lov'd the glories of the world,  
 But laws of nature were our scorn.  
 For blasts would rise and rave and cease, 85  
 But whence were those that drove the sail  
 Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,  
 And to and thro' the counter-gale ?

## XII.

Again to colder climes we came,  
 For still we follow'd where she led : 90  
 Now mate is blind and captain lame,  
 And half the crew are sick or dead,  
 But, blind or lame or sick or sound,  
 We follow that which flies before :  
 We know the merry world is round, 95  
 And we may sail for evermore.

## IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

All along the valley, stream that flashest white,  
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,  
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,  
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.  
 All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day, 5  
 The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away ;  
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,  
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,  
 And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,  
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me. 10





*The Annunciation, by Andrea del Sarto.*

To face p. 35.

# BROWNING.

---

## MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands. 5  
Will't please you sit and look at her ? I said  
" Frà Pandolf " by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by 10  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there : so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps 15  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, " Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or " Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-blush that dies along her throat :" such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart--how shall I say ? --too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed : she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one ! My favour at her breast, 25  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,

The bough of cherries some officious fool  
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but  
 thanked

30

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame

35

This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this

Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let

Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

40

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,

—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. O sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

45

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master's known munificence

Is ample warrant that no just pretence

50

Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go

Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,

55

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

## CAVALIER TUNES

## I. MARCHING ALONG.

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,  
 Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :  
 And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
 And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
 Marched them along, fifty-score strong, 5  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles ! Pym and such earles  
 To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !  
 Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,  
 Hands from the pasty, nor bite take, nor sup, 10  
 Till you're—

**CHORUS.**—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell  
 Serve Hazeltig, Fiennes, and young Harry, as well !  
 England, good cheer ! Rupert is near ! 15  
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

**CHO.**—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent earles !  
 Hold by the right, you double your might : 20  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

**CHO.**—*March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

## II. GIVE A ROUSE.

King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?  
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles !

Who gave me the goods that went since ?  
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since ?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

CHO.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?*  
*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?*  
*Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,*  
*King Charles !*

5

10

15

20

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
 By the old fool's side that begot him ?  
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,  
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

CHO.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?*  
*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?*  
*Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,*  
*King Charles !*

## III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !  
 Rescue my castle before the hot day  
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.

CHO.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ;  
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

CHO.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

5

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array : 10  
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

*Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

Who? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,  
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay !  
I've better counsellors ; what counsel they ? 15

*Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS  
FROM GHENT TO AIX"

16—.

I.

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;  
"Good speed !" cried the watch, as the gate bolts  
undrew ;  
"Speed !" echoed the wall to us galloping through ;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, 5  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our  
place ;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacken the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

## III.

'T was noonset at starting ; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;      15  
At Düffeld. 't was morning as plain as could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-  
chime,

So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

## IV.

At Aershot up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,      20  
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

## V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent  
back      25  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.      30

## VI.

By Hasselt, Direk groaned ; and cried Joris, "Stay spur !  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick  
wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering  
knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,      35  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

## VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;  
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like  
 chaff ;

40

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
 And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

## VIII.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan  
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;  
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45  
 Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

## IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50  
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;  
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or  
 good,  
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## X.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round 55  
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;  
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from  
 Ghent.

60

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

## I.

Oh, to be in England  
 Now that April's there,  
 And whoever wakes in England  
 Sees, some morning, unaware,  
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf      5  
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
 In England—now !

## II.

And after April, when May follows,  
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !      10  
 Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
 That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture      15  
 The first fine careless rapture !  
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
 The buttercups, the little children's dower  
 —Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !      20

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED THE "FAULTLESS PAINTER")

But do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,      5  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,





*Andrea and his Wife.*

To face p. 43.

Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand  
 When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ? 10  
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !  
 I often am much wearier than you think,  
 This evening more than usual, and it seems  
 As if—forgive now—should you let me sit  
 Here by the window with your hand in mine  
 And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole, 15  
 Both of one mind, as married people use,  
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,  
 I might get up to-morrow to my work  
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this ! 20  
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
 Don't count the time lost, neither ; you must serve  
 For each of the five pictures we require :  
 It saves a model. So ! keep looking so— 25  
 My, serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !  
 —How could you ever prick those perfect ears,  
 Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—  
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
 Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30  
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
 While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less.  
 You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made.  
 There's what we painters call our harmony !  
 A common grayness silvers everything,— 35  
 All in a twilight, you and I alike  
 —You, at the point of your first pride in me  
 (That's gone, you know),—but I, at every point ;  
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40

There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;  
 That length of convent-wall across the way  
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;  
 The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,  
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything. 45

Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
 As if I saw alike my work and self  
 And all that I was born to be and do,  
 A twilight piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead ; 50  
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !

I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !  
 This chamber for example—turn your head—  
 All that's behind us ! You don't understand  
 Nor care to understand about my art, 55  
 But you can hear at least when people speak :  
 And that cartoon, the second from the door  
 —It is the thing, Love ! so such thing should be—  
 Behold Madonna !—I am bold to say.

I can do with my pencil what I know,  
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—  
 Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,  
 I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge,  
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, 65  
 And just as much they used to say in France.  
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !

No sketches first, no studies, that's long past :  
 I do what many dream of all their lives,  
 —Dream ? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70  
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
 On twice your fingers and not leave this town,  
 Who strive—you don't know how the others strive  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared

Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,— 75  
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,  
 (I know his name, no matter) — so much less !  
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.  
 There burns a truer light of God in them,  
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80  
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85  
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world  
 My works are nearer heaven but I sit here.  
 The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—  
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
 I, painting from myself and to myself, 90  
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
 His hue mistaken ; what of that ? or else,  
 Rightly traced and well-ordered ; what of that ? 95  
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care ?  
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
 Or what's a heaven for ? All is silver-gray  
 Placid and perfect with my art : the worse !  
 I know both what I want and what might gain, 100  
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
 “ Had I been two, another and myself,  
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ” No doubt.  
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth  
 The Urbinate, who died five years ago. 105  
 ( 'Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)  
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,

Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,  
Above and through his art—for it gives way ; 110  
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—  
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,  
He means right—that, a child may understand.  
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it :  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—  
Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?  
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you !  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—  
More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— 125  
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !  
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
“God and the glory ! never care for gain.  
The present by the future, what is that ?  
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo ! 130  
Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three !”  
I might have done it for you. So it seems :  
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.  
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self ;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ? 135  
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?  
In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;  
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :  
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—  
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here,  
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145  
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
 The best is when they pass and look aside ;  
 But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.  
 Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,  
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau ! 150  
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—  
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155  
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear.  
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,  
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160  
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—  
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
 This in the background, waiting on my work,  
 To crown the issue with a last reward !  
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days ? 165  
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—  
 'T is done and past ; 't was right, my instinct said ;  
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,  
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170  
 How could it end in any other way ?  
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
 The triumph was—to reach and stay there ; since  
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?  
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175  
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !

“ Rafael did this, Andrea painted that ;  
 The Roman’s is the better when you pray,  
 But still the other’s Virgin was his wife”— 180  
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
 Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows  
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,  
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185  
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
 “ Friend, there’s a certain sorry little scrub  
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190  
 Who, were he set to plan and execute  
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours ! ”  
 To Rafael’s ! —And indeed the arm is wrong.  
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195  
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !  
 Ay, but the soul ! he’s Rafael ! rub it out !  
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
 (What he ? why, who but Michel Agnolo ?  
 Do you forget already words like those ?) 200  
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,—  
 Is, whether you’re—not grateful—but more pleased.  
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !  
 This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?  
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205  
 I should work better, do you comprehend ?  
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
 See, it is settled dusk now ; there’s a star ;  
 Morello’s gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210

Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,  
 Inside the melancholy little house  
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights  
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215  
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,  
 That gold of his I did cement them with!  
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220  
 Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?  
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?  
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?  
 While hand and eye and something of a heart  
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225  
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
 The gray remainder of the evening out,  
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,  
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230  
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side  
 To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—  
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
 I take the subjects for his corridor, 235  
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,  
 And throw him in another thing or two  
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough  
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
 What's better and what's all I care about, 240  
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!  
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,  
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
 I regret little, I would change still less. 245  
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
 The very wrong to Francis! —it is true  
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
 My father and my mother died of want. 250  
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.  
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:  
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time  
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255  
 Paint my too hundred pictures —let him try!  
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
 You loved me quite enough, it seems, to-night.  
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?  
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260  
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,  
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo, and me  
 To cover—the three first without a wife,  
 While I have mine! So—still they overcome, 265  
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

---

### UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

I.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,  
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;  
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

III.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least !  
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ; 5  
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a  
beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a bull  
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,  
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !  
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned  
wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?  
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to  
take the eye!

v.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,  
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off  
the heights:  
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen  
steam and wheeze,  
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-  
trees. 20

## VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;  
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.  
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers  
 well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell  
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick  
 and sell.

25

## VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and  
 splash!

In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foambows  
 flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle  
 and pash

Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,  
 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a  
 sort of a sash!

30

## VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you  
 linger,

Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted fore-  
 finger.

Some think fire-flies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and  
 mingle,

Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.  
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill, 35  
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous  
 firs on the hill.

Enough of the seasons, I spare you the months of the fever  
 and chill.

## IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin :

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in :  
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin. 40  
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,  
draws teeth ;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.  
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot !

And a notice how, only this morning three liberal thieves  
were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes, 45  
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new  
law of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so,  
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarcha, Saint Jerome and Cicero,  
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming.) "the skirts of  
Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous  
than ever he preached." 50

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession : our Lady borne  
smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck  
in her heart !

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te tootle* the fife ;  
No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure in  
life.

## X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at double the  
the rate. 55

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays  
passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!  
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity, the  
pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls  
and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow  
candles; 60

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with  
handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better pre-  
vention of scandals:

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

### LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

#### I.

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles,  
Miles and miles

On the solitary pastures where our sheep,  
Half-asleep,

Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop 5  
As they crop—

Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)

Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since

Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
Peace or war.

5

10

10

#### II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,  
As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
From the hills

15

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
 Into one,) 20  
 Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires  
 Up like fires  
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
 Bounding all,  
 Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,  
 Twelve abreast.

## III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass 25  
 Never was!  
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads  
 And embeds  
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
 Stock or stone— 30  
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
 Long ago ;  
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame  
 Struck them tame :  
 And that glory and that shame alike, the gold 35  
 Bought and sold.

## IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
 On the plains,  
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
 Overscored, 40  
 While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks  
 Through the chinks—  
 Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time  
 Sprang sublime,  
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced 45  
 As they raced,  
 And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
 Viewed the games.

## V.

And I know, while thus the quiet colored eve  
Smiles to leave 50

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
In such peace,

And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray  
Melt away—

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair 55  
Waits me there

In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul  
For the goal,

When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,  
dumb

Till I come. 60

## VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'  
Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then, 65  
All the men !

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,  
Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace  
Of my face, 70

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech  
Each on each.

## VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
South and North,

And they built their gods a brazen pillar high 75  
As the sky,





*The Guardian Angel* by Guercino.

To face p. 57.

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—  
 Gold, of course !  
 Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !  
 Earth's returns 80  
 For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin !  
 Shut them in,  
 With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !  
 Love is best.

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

## A PICTURE AT FANO

## I.

Dear and great Angel, wouldest thou only leave  
 That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !  
 Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
 Shall find performed thy special ministry,  
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending 5  
 Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,  
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

## II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
 From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,  
 —And suddenly my head is covered o'er 10  
 With those wings, white above the child who prays  
 Now on that tomb. —and I shall feel thee guarding  
 Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding  
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

## III.

I would not look up thither past thy head 15  
 Because the door opes, like that child, I know,  
 For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
 Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low

Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,  
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether  
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments spread ?

20

## IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands  
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands, 25  
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

## V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !  
I think how I should view the earth and skies  
And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :  
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
What further may be sought for or declared ?

30

35

## VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
(Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,  
Holding the little hands up, each to each  
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away  
Over the earth where so much lay before him 40  
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,  
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

40

## VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
To sit and see him in his chapel there,  
And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
—My angel with me too : and since I care

45

For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power  
And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

## VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly

50

At all times, and has else endured some wrong—  
I took one thought his picture struck from me,

And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?  
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?

55

This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

## AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,  
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,  
The not-ineurious in God's handiwork  
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapor from his mouth, man's soul)  
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,  
Whereby the wily vapor fain would slip  
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—  
And aptest in contrivance (under God)  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with  
peace)

5

10

15

Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still,  
 One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
 (But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)  
 And writeth now the twenty-second time.

20

My journeyings were brought to Jericho :  
 Thus I resume. Who, studious in our art,  
 Shall count a little labor unrepaid ?  
 I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
 On many a flinty furlong of this land.

25

Also, the country-side is all on fire  
 With rumors of a marching hitherward :  
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;

30

Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :  
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.  
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,  
 And once a town declared me for a spy ;  
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night,

35

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree  
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !  
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,

To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.

40

A viscid choler is observable  
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;  
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
 Than our school wots of ; there's a spider here  
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,  
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back ;  
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his  
 mind,  
 The Syrian runagate I trust this to ?

45

His service payeth me a sublime 50  
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
 Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
 There set in order my experiences,  
 Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—  
 Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth 55  
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,  
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—  
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar— 60  
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—  
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal? 65  
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
 What set me off a-writing first of all.  
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!  
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else  
 The Man had something in the look of him—  
 His case has struck me far more than 't is worth. 70  
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose,  
 In the great press of novelty at hand,  
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)  
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind.  
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth? 75  
 The very man is gone from me but now,  
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'T is but a case of mania—subinduced  
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point 80  
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:  
 When, by the exhibition of some drug

Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art  
 Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,  
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once 85

Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—  
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,  
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe  
 Whatever it was minded on the wall 90

So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent  
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls  
 The just-returned and new-established soul  
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart 95

That henceforth she will read or these or none.  
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests  
 That he was dead (in fact, they buried him)  
 —That he was dead, and then restored to life  
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe : 100

—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.  
 "Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.  
 Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,  
 Instead of giving way to time and health,  
 Should eat itself into the life of life, 105

As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones, and all!  
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
 The body's habit wholly laudable, 110

As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
 As he were made and put aside to show.  
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep! 115  
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?

This grown man eyes the world now like a child.  
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, 120  
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—  
He listened not except I spoke to him,  
But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.  
And that's a sample how his years must go. 125  
Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,  
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same  
With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,  
And take at once to his impoverished brain  
The sudden element that changes things, 130  
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand  
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?  
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—  
Warily parsimonious, when no need,  
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times? 135  
All prudent counsel as to what befits  
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:  
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,  
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty— 140  
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:  
The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
The value in proportion of all things,  
Or whether it be little or be much. 145  
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
Assembled to besiege his city now,  
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—  
'T is one! Then take it on the other side,  
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt 150

With stupor at its very littleness,  
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed  
 He caught prodigious import, whole results ;  
 And so will turn to us the bystanders  
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)  
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.  
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.

Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look  
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
 Or pretermission of the daily craft !

While a word, gesture, glance from that same child  
 At play or in the school or laid asleep  
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,  
 Exasperation, just as like. Demand

The reason why—“t is but a word,” object—  
 “A gesture”—he regards thee as our lord,  
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
 Looked at us (dost thou mind ?) when, being young  
 We both would unadvisedly recite

Some charm’s beginning, from that book of his,  
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.

Thou and the child have each a veil alike  
 Thrown o’er your heads, from under which ye both      175  
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match  
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !  
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life—  
 (It is the life to lead perforceedly)

Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—  
 The spiritual life around the earthly life :  
 The law of that is known to him as this,

155

160

165

170

175

180

His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here. 185  
 So is the man perplext with impulses  
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,  
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze—  
 "It should be" balked by "here it cannot be." 190  
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face  
 As if he saw again and heard again  
 His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.  
 Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within  
 Admonishes: then back he sinks at once 195  
 To ashes, who was very fire before,  
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;  
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
 Professedly the faultier that he knows 200  
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
 Indeed the especial marking of the man  
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will—  
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.  
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last 205  
 For that same death which must restore his being  
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
 Divorced even now by premature full growth:  
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
 So long as God please, and just how God please. 210  
 He even seeketh not to please God more  
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.  
 Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach  
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,  
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do: 215  
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,  
 His own conviction? Ardent as he is—  
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old

“Be it as God please” reassureth him.  
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should : 220  
 “How, beast,” said I, “this stolid carelessness  
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march  
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?”  
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me. 225  
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?  
 Contariwise, he loves both old and young,  
 Able and weak, affects the very brutes  
 And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—  
 As a wise workman recognizes tools 230  
 In a master’s workshop, loving what they make.  
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:  
 Only impatient, let him do his best,  
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—  
 An indignation, which is promptly curbed : 235  
 As when in certain travel I have feigned  
 To be an ignoramus in our art,  
 According to some preconceived design,  
 And happed to hear the land’s practitioners,  
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance, 240  
 Prattle fantastically on disease,  
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this  
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,  
 Conferring with the frankness that befits ? 245  
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
 Accused,—our learning’s fate,—of wizardry,  
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
 And creed prodigious as described to me. 250

His death, which happened when the earthquake fell  
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
 To occult learning in our lord the sage  
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone) 255

Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont !

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,  
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—  
 How could he stop the earthquake ? That's their way !

The other imputations must be lies : 260

But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,  
 In mere respect for any good man's fame.

(And after all our patient Lazarus  
 Is stark mad ; should we count on what he says ?

Perhaps not : though in writing to a leech 265

'T is well to keep back nothing of a case.)

This man so cured regards the curer, then,  
 As—God forgive me ! who but God himself,  
 Creator and sustainer of the world,

That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile ! 270

—Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,  
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,  
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know.

And yet was . . . what I said, nor choose repeat,  
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact, 275

In hearing of this very Lazarus  
 Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?

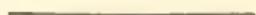
Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
 Calling at every moment for remark ?

I noticed on the margin of a pool 280  
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,  
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem  
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth ! 285

Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
 Good cause for the peculiar interest  
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.  
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus : 290  
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills,  
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came  
 A moon made like a face with certain spots  
 Multiform, manifold, and menacing :  
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met 295  
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,  
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked  
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,  
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. 300  
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends  
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine ;  
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?  
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too— 305  
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice,  
 Saying, “O heart I made, a heart beats here !  
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !  
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,  
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love, 310  
 And thou must love me who have died for thee !”  
 The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

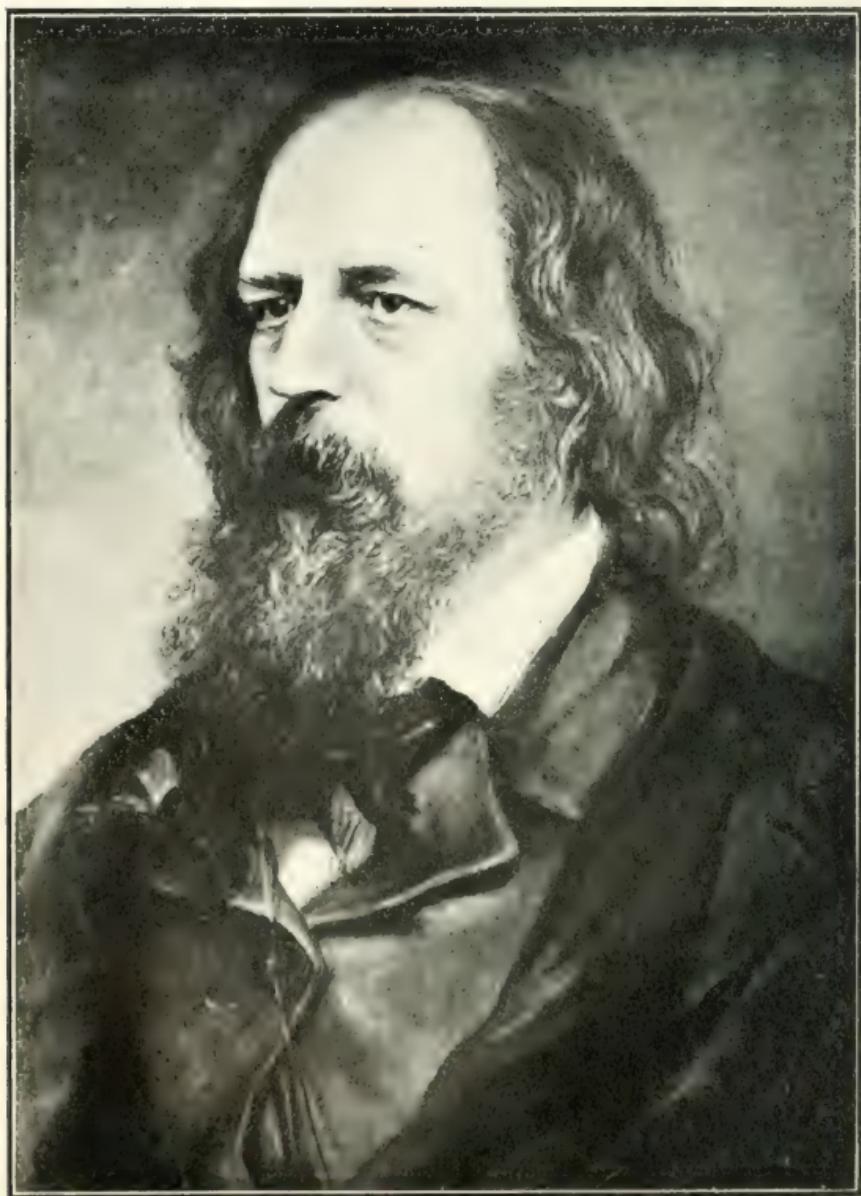


## PROSPICE.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
 The mist in my face,  
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
 I am nearing the place,  
 The power of the night, the press of the storm, 5  
 The post of the foe;  
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
 Yet the strong man must go:  
 For the journey is done and the summit attained.  
 And the barriers fall, 10  
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
 The reward of it all.  
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
 The best and the last!  
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and  
 forbore, 15  
 And bade me creep past.  
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
 The heroes of old,  
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
 Of pain, darkness and cold. 20  
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
 The black minute's at end,  
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain, 25  
 Then a light, then thy breast,  
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
 And with God be the rest!







*Tennyson.*

To face p. 71.

## NOTES ON TENNYSON.

ALFRED TENNYSON was the third son of the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, rector of Somersby, a small village in Lincolnshire not far from the sea-coast. Though in the neighbourhood of the fen country, Somersby itself lies "in a pretty pastoral district of sloping hills and large ash trees." "To the north rises the long peak of the wold, with its steep white road that climbs the hill above Thetford; to the south, the land slopes gently to a small deep-channelled brook, which rises not far from Somersby and flows just below the parsonage garden." The scenery of his native village and its neighbourhood, where he spent his youth and early manhood,—the scenery of wold, and fen, and sandy coast—made a deep impress on the poet's mind, and is reflected again and again in his earlier writings. In the parsonage of Somersby, which was then the only considerable house in the little hamlet, Alfred was born August 6th, 1809. His father was a man of ability, with intellectual and artistic interests; books were at hand, and the three elder boys not only became great readers, but from childhood were accustomed to write original verses. The life of the Tennysons was a somewhat secluded one; Alfred was naturally shy, with a bent towards solitary and imaginative pursuits. These tendencies may have been fostered by the character of his early education. He was not sent to a great public school, like most English boys of his class, but attended the village school at Somersby, then the grammar school at the neighbouring town of Louth, and was finally prepared for entering college by home tuition. Already before he had become an undergraduate, he was an author, having, along with his elder brother Charles, written a volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, which was published at Louth in 1827 by a local bookseller. The work is creditable to such youthful poets (the poems contributed by Alfred were composed between his fifteenth and his seventeenth year), but more remarkable for the absence of marked immaturity than for the presence of positive merits. The breadth of the authors' reading is attested by quotations prefixed to the various pieces: Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Terence, Lucretius, Sibyl, Tassitus, Byron, Cowper, Gray, Hume, Moore, Scott, Beattie and Addison being all put under contribution.

In 1828 Charles and Alfred entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where the eldest brother, Frederick, was already a student. There the Tenny-

sons were associated with some of the most brilliant and promising of their contemporaries. Alfred formed an especially warm friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam, a young man of extraordinary endowments, whose premature death he subsequently commemorated in *In Memoriam*. In 1829 Tennyson won the Chancellor's prize for English verse by a poem on "Timbuctoo," where for the first time in his work, there is some promise of future excellence, and some faint touches of his later style. Next year his poetic career may be said really to have begun with a small volume entitled *Poems Chiefly Lyrical*, which in such poems as *Claribel*, *The Dying Swan*, *Mariana*, and *The Poet*, clearly exhibits some of his characteristic qualities. The volume was favourably reviewed by Leigh Hunt and Hallam, but severely criticized by "Christopher North" in *Blackwood*. In the same year the author embarked on a very different undertaking, going with Hallam to Spain in order to carry, to the revolutionists there, money and letters from English sympathizers. In 1831 his college career was brought to a close by the death of his father, and he returned to Somersby. Here he completed a second volume of poems, published in 1832. This marks another advance in poetic art, and contains some of his most characteristic pieces: *The Lady of Shalott*, *Oenone*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *The Two Voices*. It should be remembered, however, that several of these do not now appear in their original form, and that much of their perfection is due to revisions later than 1832. This volume, as well as its predecessor, was severely criticized, especially by the *Quarterly*. But although in this article justice was not done to the merits of the volume, the strictures upon defects were in the main well grounded, as the poet himself tacitly acknowledged by omitting or amending in subsequent editions the objectionable passages. Another result of the hostility of the critics was that Tennyson, who was always morbidly sensitive to criticism even from the most friendly source, ceased publishing for almost ten years, except that verses from his pen occasionally appeared in the pages of *Literary Annuals*. This ten-years silence is characteristic of the man, of his self-restraint and power of patient application—potent factors in the ultimate perfection of his work.

The sudden death of his friend Hallam, in September 1833, plunged Tennyson for a time in profound sorrow, but was doubtless effective in maturing and deepening his emotional and intellectual life. The poet's sister had been betrothed to Hallam; over the household at Somersby, of which Alfred, in the absence of his elder brothers,

was now the head, there gathered a deep gloom. The feelings and ideas which centred about this great sorrow of his youthful days, the poet soon began to embody in short lyrics ; these through successive years grew in number and variety, and finally took shape in what by many is considered Tennyson's greatest work, *In Memoriam*.

It was in 1836, when Charles Tennyson was married to Louisa Sellwood, that in all probability Alfred fell in love with the bride's sister, to whom, in course of time he became engaged. The small fortune which he had inherited was insufficient to provide a maintenance for a married pair ; poetry, to which he had devoted his life, seemed unlikely ever to yield him a sufficient income. Yet, characteristically enough, Tennyson neither attempted to find a more lucrative profession, nor even departed from his resolve to refrain from again seeking public notice until his genius and his work had become fully matured. In consequence, the friends of his betrothed put an end to the correspondence of the lovers ; and a long period of trial began for the poet, when his prospects in love, in worldly fortune, in poetic success, seemed almost hopelessly overcast. In 1837 the family removed from Somersby to High Beech in Epping Forest, then to Tunbridge Wells, and then to the neighbourhood of Maidstone. The change of residence brought Tennyson into closer proximity with the capital, and henceforward, he frequently resorted thither to visit old friends like Spedding, and gradually became personally known in the literary circles of London. Among other notable men he met with Carlyle, found pleasure in the company of this uncouth genius and his clever wife, and, in turn, was regarded with unusual favour by a keen-eyed and censorious pair of critics. Tennyson was one of the very few distinguished men whose personality impressed Carlyle favourably. The account which the latter gives of Tennyson in a letter to Emerson, dated August 1844, is worth quoting at length :—

" Maxon informs me that Tennyson is now in Town, and means to come and see me. Of this latter result I shall be very glad. Alfred is one of the few British and Foreign Figures (a not increasing number, I think) who are and remain essential to me—a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, 'Brother !' However, I doubt he will not come ; he often skips me in these brief visits to Town ; skips everybody, indeed ; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, —carrying a bit of gloom about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into *Cosmos*. Alfred is the son of a *Life-in-hire Gentleman Farmer*, I think ; indeed you see it in his verses that he is a native of 'moated granges,' and green flat pastures, not of mountains and their torrents and storms. He had his breeding at Cambridge, as for the Law or Church ; being master of a small annuity on his Father's decease, he preferred travelling with his Mother and some

Sisters, to live unpromoted and write poems. In this way he lives still, now here, now there ; the family always within reach of London, never in it ; he himself making rare and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade's rooms. I think he must be under forty—not much under it. One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair ; bright, laughing, hazel eyes ; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate ; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking ; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy ; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between ; speech and speculation free and plenteous : I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe ! We shall see what he will grow to. He is often unwell ; very chaotic—his way is through Chaos and the Bottomless and Pathless ; not handy for making out many miles upon."

Meanwhile, in 1842, two years before this letter was written, Tennyson gave conclusive evidence of the power that was in him, by the publication of two volumes containing, in the first place, a selection from the poems of 1830 and of 1832, and, secondly, a large number of new pieces. Among the latter are *Morte d'Arthur*, *Ulysses*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *The Talking Oak*, *Locksley Hall*, *Dora*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, *St. Agnes' Eve*, "Break, break, break," and the three poems "You ask me why," "Of old sat Freedom," "Love thou thy land." Such pieces as these represent the mature art of their author, and some of them he never surpassed. It was about the time of the publication of these volumes that the fortunes of their author reached their lowest point. The failure of a manufacturing scheme in which he had invested all his means left him penniless. "Then followed," says his son and biographer, "a season of real hardship, and many trials for my father and mother, since marriage seemed to be further off than ever. So severe a hypochondria set in upon him that his friends despaired of his life. 'I have,' he writes, 'drunk one of those most bitter draughts out of the cup of life, which go near to make men hate the world they live in.'" But, at length, the fates became propitious. In the first place the excellence of the collected poems of 1842 rapidly won general recognition ; during his ten years of silence Tennyson's reputation had been steadily growing, the two volumes of 1842 set it upon a firm basis. From that day to this, he has held the first place in general estimation among contemporary poets. In 1845 Wordsworth pronounced him "decidedly the first of our living poets" ; in the same year the fourth edition of the *Poems* of 1842 was called for, and the publisher, Moxon, said that Tennyson was the only poet by the publication of whose works he had not been a loser. Further, in 1845, the prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, through the intervention of Tennyson's old college friend Milnes (Lord Houghton), conferred upon him a pension of £200

a year. This was a timely relief to pecuniary difficulties which were at this date very embarrassing. *The Princess*, his first long work, was published in 1847. Through a fanciful story of a Princess who founds a university for women, it gave a poetical presentation and solution of the 'woman question'; but rather disappointed, at the time, the high expectations excited by the earlier writings. On the other hand, *In Memoriam*, which appeared in 1850, has from the beginning been considered one of the finest products of his genius. It consists of a series of lyrics giving utterance to various moods and thoughts to which the great sorrow of his youth had given birth. These had been carefully elaborated during a long period, are extraordinarily finished in their expression and are fuller of substance than any other of the more ambitious works of their author. No other poem so adequately represents the current thought and average attitude of Tennyson's generation in regard to many of the great problems of the time. In the year of the publication of *In Memoriam*, the laureateship, rendered vacant by the death of Wordsworth, was bestowed upon its author. In the same year his marriage with Emily Sellwood took place. They had been separated from one another for ten years; Tennyson's age was forty-one, the bride's thirty-seven. But their fidelity was rewarded. "The peace of God," Tennyson said, "came into my life before the altar when I married her"; and indeed the remainder of the poet's long life, apart from the death in the first years of manhood of his second son, is a record of happiness and success such as does not fall to the lot of many men.

After a tour in Italy the Tennysons in 1853 took up their residence at Farringford, in the Isle of Wight, which was henceforth their home, and the poet entered upon a period of sure and increasing popularity and growing worldly prosperity. He never relaxed, however, even in advanced old age, his strenuous poetic industry; hence a long series of works of a high order of merit, of which we will mention only the more important. In 1855, *Maud*, a lyrical monodrama, was published, about which critical opinion was then and still remains greatly divided, though the poet himself regarded it with special favour. In 1857, Bayard Taylor visited Tennyson at his home and records his impressions: "He is tall and broad-shouldered as a son of Anak, with hair, beard, and eyes of Southern darkness. Something in the lofty brow and aquiline nose suggests Dante, but such a deep, mellow chest-voice never could have come from Italian lungs. He proposed a walk, as the day was wonderfully clear and beautiful. We climbed the steep comb

of the chalk cliff, and slowly wandered westward until we reached the Needles, at the extremity of the Island, and some three or four miles distant from his residence. During the conversation with which we beguiled the way, I was struck with the variety of his knowledge. Not a little flower on the downs, which the sheep had spared, escaped his notice, and the geology of the coast, both terrestrial and submarine, were perfectly familiar to him. I thought of a remark that I had once heard from the lips of a distinguished English author [Thackeray] that Tennyson was the wisest man he knew."

Tennyson, as such poems as *The Lady of Shalott* and *Morte d'Arthur* show, had been early attracted by the legendary tales of King Arthur, which to several poets had seemed a rich storehouse of poetical material. About the year 1857 he began to occupy himself specially with these legends; and from this time on until the middle seventies his chief energy was given to the composition of a series of poems from these sources, which were ultimately arranged to form a composite whole, entitled the *Idylls of the King*. These poems proved very acceptable to the general taste, and the poet began to reap a fortune from the sale of his works. Of the volume published in 1862, entitled *Enoch Arden*, which mainly consisted of English Idyls, sixty thousand copies were rapidly sold. This, perhaps, marks the height of his popularity.

In 1875 he entered on a new field with the publication of an historical drama, *Queen Mary*, followed in 1876 by a similar work, *Harold*, and by other dramatic pieces in later years. In the drama Tennyson was less successful than in any other department which he attempted, and this lack of success gave rise to a widespread feeling that his powers were now in decline. Such a conclusion was most decisively negatived by the appearance of *Ballads and Other Poems* in 1880, where he returned to less ambitious and lengthy but more congenial forms—a collection which Mr. Theodore Watts terms "the most richly various volume of English verse that has appeared in [Tennyson's] century." At intervals until the very close of his long life, he produced similar miscellaneous collections of poems: *Tiresias and Other Poems*, 1885, *Demeter and Other Poems*,\* 1889, *The Death of Oenone and Other Poems*, 1892. Some of the pieces contained in these miscellanies were doubtless the gleanings of earlier years; but in others there were qualities which clearly showed them to be the

---

\* Twenty thousand copies of this book were sold within a week.

products of a new epoch in a genius that went on changing and developing even in advanced old age. In the most characteristic pieces, *The Revenge*, *The Relief of Lucknow*, *Elizab.*, *Vastness*, etc., there is a vigour and dramatic force absent in his earlier work, with less of that minute finish and elaborate perfection of phrase which is so often his chief merit. On the other hand, in *Freedom*, *To Virg'z*, and *Crossing the Bar*, we have poems in the more familiar Tennysonian style, not a whit inferior to similar compositions in the volumes of his prime. In 1884 Tennyson was raised to the peerage as Baron of Aldworth and Farrington. The first part of his title was derived from a second residence which he had built for himself in Surrey, choosing a very retired situation in order that he might escape the idle curiosity of tourists. In 1886, the second great sorrow of his life befell Tennyson; his younger son, Lionel, died on the return voyage from India, where he had contracted a fever.

To Tennyson's continued mental vigour in advanced old age, his works bear testimony; his bodily strength was also little abated. "At eighty-two," his son reports, "my father preserved the high spirits of youth. He would defy his friends to get up twenty times quickly from a low chair without touching it with their hands while he was performing this feat himself, and one afternoon he had a long waltz with M—— in the ball room." This vigour was maintained almost to the very close of his long life. It was the sixth of October, 1892, when the great poet breathed his last. "Nothing could have been more striking than the scene during the last few hours," writes his medical attendant. "On the bed a figure of breathing marble, flooded and bathed in the light of the full moon streaming through the oriel window; his hand clasping the Shakespeare which he had asked for but recently, and which he had kept by him to the end; the moonlight, the majestic figure as he lay there, 'drawing thicker breath.' irresistibly brought to our minds his own 'Passing of Arthur.'" "Some friends and servants came to see him. He looked very grand and peaceful with the deep furrows of thought almost smoothed away, and the old clergyman of Lurgashall stood by the bed with his hands raised, and said, 'Lord Tennyson, God has taken you, who made you a prince of men. Farewell!'"

Some personal peculiarities may be added. Although so accurate an observer of nature, Tennyson was very short-sighted. He was subject to fits of intense abstraction similar to those recorded of Socrates. He said to Mr. Knowles: "Sometimes as I sit here alone in this great

room I get carried away out of sense and body, and rapt into mere existence, till the accidental touch or movement of one of my own fingers is like a great shock and blow and brings the body back with a terrible start.” \*

He was accustomed to compose single lines or isolated passages, and to note down images and natural details which he preserved and would subsequently incorporate in his poems. At page 465 of the first volume of the *Life*, his biographer gives a number of these which had been gathered during various tours, *e.g.*,

“As those that lie on happy shores and see  
Thro’ the near blossom slip the distant sail.”

“Ledges of battling water.”

“A cow drinking from a trough on the hill-side. The netted beams of light played on the wrinkles of her throat.”

“His reading was always in a grand, deep, measured voice, and was rather intoning in a few notes than speaking. It was like a sort of musical thunder, far off or near—loud rolling or ‘sweet and low’—according to the subject, and once heard could never be forgotten” (Knowles). Miss Thackeray (Mrs. Ritchie) confirms this, describing it as “a sort of mystical incantation, a chant in which every note rises and falls and reverberates again.” But some who heard him complain that his reading was so inarticulate as to be scarcely intelligible.

“His acquaintance with all previous poetry was unlimited and his memory amazing” (Knowles).

Mrs. Oliphant, in her Autobiography, giving an account of a visit, says: “I have always thought that Tennyson’s appearance was too emphatically that of a poet, especially in his photographs: the fine frenzy, the careless picturesqueness were almost too much. He looked the part too well: but in reality there was a roughness and acrid gloom about the man which saved him from his over-romantic appearance.

. . . The conversation turned somehow upon his little play of ‘The Falcon.’ . . . I said something about its beauty, and that I thought it just the kind of entertainment which a gracious prince might offer to his guests; and he replied with a sort of indignant sense of grievance, ‘And they tell me people won’t go to see it.’ ”

His ideas in regard to ‘the great problems’ seem to have varied from time to time. The Rev. Doctor Gatty records: “Many years ago I

\* Compare *In Memoriam*, xev, and the trances of the Prince in *The Princess*. In reference to the former passage he said: “I’ve often a strange feeling of being wound and wrapped in the Great Soul.”

had a conversation with the poet in his attic study at Farringford, that lasted till nearly day-break. He discoursed on many subjects, and when we touched on religion, he said, 'I am not very fond of creeds: it is enough for me to know that God Himself came down from heaven in the form of man.' \* "This is a terrible age of unfaith," he would say. "I hate utter unfaith, I cannot endure that men should sacrifice everything at the cold altar of what with their imperfect knowledge they choose to call truth and reason. One can easily lose all belief, through giving up the continual thought and care for spiritual things." He was always greatly interested in the question of a future life and clung passionately to the belief in a personal immortality. "Yes, it is true," he said in January, 1869, "that there are moments when the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the spiritual the only real and true. Depend upon it, the Spiritual is the real: it belongs to me more than the hand and the foot." Mr. Knowles reports that, in conversation with him, Tennyson formulated his creed thus: "There's a Something that watches over us; and our individuality endures: that's my faith, and that's all my faith." "My greatest wish," he once said, "is to have a clearer vision of God."

---

*General Characteristics.*

**Tennyson's Success.**—Tennyson's poetic career was an unusually long one, extending as it did over more than sixty years, and during all that time there was no marked decadence of power such as has been so often manifest in the later work of imaginative writers. Very early in that career he was successful in winning the highest position in popular estimation, and may be said to have maintained it steadily until the end. The partial eclipse of his fame during the seventies was due rather to his employing his powers in the uncongenial sphere of the drama, than to any actual decay of force. It must be further noted that Tennyson's work was not merely esteemed, it was *read*—and that not by a clique of admirers merely, or by a select number of cultivated people, or by the uncritical public alone; it was widely read and really enjoyed by all classes that are at all interested in poetry. Like Pope he was speedily and generally accepted as adequately voicing the thoughts and feelings of his contemporaries. Such success always

---

\*Compare the prologue to *In Memoriam*.

implies some specially happy adaptation of the genius of the writer to the conditions of his era,—an adaptation which spares him from the conflict and dissipation of force arising from attempts to embody themes and to adopt methods to which the age is little favourable; the inborn aptitudes of such a poet must be in harmony with existing tendencies and the tastes of his contemporaries.

**Poetic conditions in his time.**—Tennyson himself indicates the prime conditions, positive and negative, to which the successful poet of his own time had to accommodate himself. “I soon found,” he once said in conversation with his friend, Mr. James Knowles, “that if I meant to make any mark at all it must be by shortness, for all the men before me had been so diffuse and all the big things had been done. To get the workmanship as nearly perfect as possible is the best chance for going down the stream of time. A small vessel on fine lines is likely to float further than a great raft.”\*

Tennyson here emphasizes two points, (1) the very obvious fact that he is a late poet, and (2), in consequence of that fact, that he could hope to excel only by perfection in detail and finish in technique. He is not merely a late poet in the midst of a vast accumulation of the work of predecessors in his own and other languages; the natural effect of such lateness is intensified by the fact that he comes at the close of one of those eras of marked fertility which are conspicuous at intervals in the history of poetic literature, and are separated by other eras of comparative barrenness and mediocrity. The great movement which had its beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and reached its brilliant culmination in the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats, was, when Tennyson reached maturity (as is abundantly clear to us now), passing into its latest phase. He is a poet, if not of the decline, at least of the close, when the first enthusiasm has spent itself, when the new fields have been traversed, when the new forms have lost their novelty. Such a writer is under serious disadvantages; the most obvious or suitable themes have been treated, the early freshness has vanished. But first enthusiasm, new methods, and new themes are not favourable to perfection in detail. That comes from experience, from calm judgment, and laborious care. And here the later poet has advantages which the earlier does not enjoy. Greatness of conception may be supposed to be dependent on the individual mind, but the history of all arts shows that supreme technical skill can

\* See the interesting article entitled *Aspects of Tennyson* in *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1893.

only be attained through the experiments, successes, and failures of generations of artists; primitive art is always awkward, new attempts inevitably suffer under defects of form. The opportunity for the poet in Tennyson's day, as he himself thought, lay in technique, in finish, in detail; and his own endowments and circumstances were such as to fit him for success in these respects. The conditions of his personal life were favourable to culture. Beyond preceding eras, the Nineteenth Century possessed the historic sense, rendered accessible, and was capable of appreciating, the literary stores of the past. Tennyson himself was endowed with openness of mind, catholic tastes, great powers of assimilation, and scholarly aptitudes. He became early familiar with the best that had been done; he was well read not only in his mother tongue, but in Greek, Latin and Italian literatures. If, then, he felt (as he himself confesses) hampered by the existence of all this splendid poetry of his predecessors, he at least succeeded in making the best of the circumstance,—studied their art, borrowed multitudinous hints, phrases, images from their works. So the reader of his works is struck by his eclecticism, the power of learning from writers of diverse genius, ages, and nations, and of welding varied materials into new and perfect wholes. Especially do we note this breadth and catholicity of Tennyson's genius, when we compare his work with that of his immediate forerunners, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Scott, each somewhat narrow in his poetic tastes, and excelling within a somewhat limited province. Tennyson profits by the example of writers as different as Wordsworth and Keats; he attempts varied subjects and different manners: classic, romantic, domestic themes; the simple and the ornate style; lyric, dramatic, narrative poetry; song, monologue, idyll. His success is, upon the whole, extraordinary; and this versatility makes it difficult to characterize his work in general terms. At the same time, it is abundantly manifest that only certain of these attempts are wholly congenial to his mind and manner, that others, however excellent, are *tours de force*—the results of great general poetic power patiently and judiciously employed in using what he has learnt from others.

**Perfection of his work in detail.** To this breadth of taste and of reading, this power of profiting by example, Tennyson added a natural aptitude for detail, for careful and finished work. His poetic character is here in harmony with the general tendency of his age, especially manifest in the minuteness and accuracy of modern science. The same spirit is present in his delineations of nature, which surpass those of

earlier poets in the minuteness and accuracy of the features noted. His earliest publications seem to show that what impelled him to poetry was not the need of embodying some pressing thought or feeling, but the delight in heaping together beautiful details, the pleasure in musical phrases, exquisite imagery, in the skill of the artist. Whatever charm exists in such characteristic poems as *Claribel*, or the *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, lies in the details ; the meaning and purport of the whole is vague. Tennyson's earliest efforts are marked by paucity of thought, absence of intense feeling, but by exuberant richness of expression. This richness was, at the beginning, excessive and unformed ; but presently the poet showed that he had unusual capacity for laborious revision and self-criticism. He rapidly developed critical judgment and self-restraint. He could learn even from the galling article in *The Quarterly* for 1833.\* We hear of the endless pains with which he polished line after line before publication ; and, even after that, the successive texts of many passages† exhibit emendations extraordinarily numerous, minute, and effective. One is particularly surprised by the extent to which in many cases the final beauty and power of a passage are the creation of these changes, and are absent from the original text.

Even the limitations of Tennyson's genius helped him to excel in his own particular sphere. He lacked the impetuous temperament which we are wont to associate with the highest poetic endowment, ardour which springs from intense feeling or the consciousness of abundant material pressing for utterance, or of great thoughts to be revealed. There are, indeed, two kinds of artistic workers. Some are so dominated by the feeling, or thought, that it seems to take form without the conscious intervention of the artist himself. Or, at least, his thoughts and feelings are primarily busied with the whole conception—the mood, character, situation, or whatever else it may be—and all details are suggested from, and considered in relation to, this central idea. In others, there is no such dominating inspiration ; the primary interest is in the beauty of detail ; the whole is of secondary interest sought out as a centre and support for the parts. To Wordsworth, his own message seemed of such weight, that its form must have always had but a second place ; the emotional temperament of Shelley would not permit

\* See Dixon's *Primer of Tennyson*, pp. 40, fol. "Some of the pieces which drew forth [the reviewer's] sarcastic comments were omitted from future editions, and almost all were altered or re-written in respect of the censured passages."

† In *The Lady of Shalott*, *Oenone*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, striking examples are to be found.

him coldly to reshape what had been moulded in the white heat of inspiration. These two poets belong to the first-mentioned kind. But if the relative importance of the impressions made upon the reader by successive passages and by the whole outcome, be a criterion, Tennyson, unlike them, is an artist of the other class. Of this there is a quaint illustration in a letter\* of his friend Spedding, written shortly before the composition of *Enoch Arden*: "Alfred," he says, "wants a story to treat, being full of poetry with nothing to put it in." We get a hint of this tendency to work up details, apart from the theme which they were to unfold, in the poet's letter to Mr. S. E. Dawson prefixed to the latter's edition of *The Princess*: "There was a period in my life," writes Tennyson, "when, as an artist—Turner, for instance,—takes rough sketches of landscape, etc., in order to work them eventually into some great picture; so I was in the habit of chronicling, in four or five words or more, whatever might strike me as picturesque in nature." We note, too, how he uses over again, in new connections, lines and phrases employed in pieces which he suppressed.

**Metrical and musical effects.**—The most universal and characteristic quality of Tennyson's work, then, is its perfection in detail—its finished technique, the beauty which pertains to each line and phrase. We may next inquire by what devices he attains this beauty of detail, and in what special peculiarities of technique does this mastery exhibit itself. If we turn for a clue to his earlier poems, where his natural bent is most likely to exhibit itself clearly, the first quality which gives them distinction is the subtle adaptation of sound to sense,—the attempt, by varying of lines and stanzas, by the adjustment of verse pauses, of metrical feet, of vowel and consonantal sounds, to reflect and suggest the meaning and emotional accompaniments of the thought expressed. The poet, in fact, seeks to approximate through the articulate sounds of verse to the effects produced by music. The poem to which he gave the first place in the volume of 1830, significantly entitled "*Claribel, a Melody*," exhibits this musical quality almost to the exclusion of any other; and the prevalence of this quality throughout the volume is the most novel and striking characteristic of the new poet's work. An attempt of this kind naturally leads to the taking of great liberties with the regular norm of verse in order to attain suitably varied effects; hence one is struck by the apparent capriciousness of lines and stanzas; and Coleridge was led to say after examining these pieces that the author "had begun to write poetry without

---

\* Quoted in Dixon's *Primer*, p. 107.

very well understanding what metre was." In time, however, Tennyson learned to combine musical with properly metrical effects, and such a piece as *The Lotos-Eaters* is an example of his triumphant success. But everywhere in his poetry, this imitative rhythm is present, most effective, perhaps, when least obtrusive—when it is felt, but is scarcely capable of being exactly indicated and analysed. The influence of this tendency on his blank verse is to give it great variety, and to produce a large number of lines in which wide departures are made from the regular metrical norm. For example, in the following cases there is a multiplication of unaccented syllables :

Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn.

—*The Princess.*

Of some precipitous rivulet to the sea,

—*Gareth and Lynette.*

Melody on branch and melody in mid air.

—*Ibid.*

I saw the flaring atom-streams

Ruining along the illimitable inane.

—*Lucretius.*

Again, by the arrangement of the main pauses, a sudden break is made in the flow of the verse in keeping with the meaning conveyed :

his arms

Clash'd ; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.

—*Gareth and Lynette.*

Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave

Drops flat.

—*The Last Tournament.*

made his horse

Caracole ; then bow'd his homage, bluntly saying, etc.

—*Ibid.*

Flash'd, started, met him at the door, and these, etc.

—*Ibid.*

These are two of the commonest devices of this character, but a little careful examination will reveal a great many of a more subtle or composite kind, for example :

Down the long stairs, hesitating.

—*Lancelot and Elaine.*

So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

—*Morte d'Arthur.*

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

—*Ulysses.*

The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep  
Means round with many voices,

—*Ibid.*

Again, we are often conscious of a subtle appropriateness in the choice of the vowel or consonantal sounds :

The moan of doves in immemorial elms  
And murmuring of innumerable bees,

*The Princess.*

The long low dune and lazy-plunging sea.

—*The Last Tournament.*

Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,  
Shield breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash, etc.

—*The Passing of Arthur.*

The league-long roller thundering on the reef.

—*Enoch Arden.*\*

Kindred but broader effects are produced by the poet's happy selection and management of stanza-forms, of which his works afford a great variety. Compare, for example, the four-line stanzas of *In Memoriam*, of the song in *The Brook*, of *The Palace of Art*, and note how each one admirably suits the theme for which it is employed. Many different elements are combined in the appropriate and subtly varied music of the following exquisite lines :—

I.

O that 'twere possible  
After long grief and pain  
To find the arms of my true love  
Round me once again !

II.

When I was wont to meet her  
In the silent woody places  
By the home that gave me birth,  
We stood tranced in long embraces  
Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter  
Than anything on earth.

\*Also contrast the vowel effects in

On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
Lay a great water, and the moon was full

with

And fling him far into the middle mere :  
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.

For further examples, see the Introduction to the Tennyson volumes in *English Classics* edited by Mr. Rowe.

## III.

A shadow flits before me,  
 Not thou, but like to thee :  
 Ah Christ, that it were possible  
 For one short hour to see  
 The souls we loved, that they might tell us  
 What and where they be.

Etc.

—*Maud*, Pt. ii.

**Pictorial details used to suggest a thought, feeling, or situation.**—In the last paragraph attention has been drawn to the way in which the poet, through sound and metrical effects, indirectly suggests and instils the fitting tone of mind and feeling. Another peculiarity of his technique, conspicuous in his earliest volumes and pervading all his work, is a similar indirect method of suggesting or presenting a situation through the details of landscape and other material surroundings. The genius of Tennyson is eminently pictorial ; he delights and excels in pictures of external objects ; *The Recollections of the Arabian Nights* is nothing but a series of these, and the whole of the volume which contained this poem, bore evidence of this tendency. Such a preference does the poet's genius have for these picturesque effects that, instead of directly describing some inner condition of mind or feeling, or in addition to directly describing it, he reflects it through the external surroundings. For example, he wishes us to understand and feel the desolation and loneliness of Mariana in the poem so named ; yet he does not describe the mood directly. The whole poem is a picture of the moated grange and its surroundings, from which he selects every sight and sound that may suggest loneliness and long neglect. “There is not, throughout the poem, a single epithet which belongs to the objects irrespective of the story with which the scene is associated, or a single detail introduced which does not aid the general expression of the poem. They mark either the pain with which Mariana looks at things, or the long neglect to which she has been abandoned, or some peculiarity of time and place which marks the morbid minuteness of her attention to objects.”\* The landscape of *The Lotos-Eaters* affords a masterly illustration of the same artifice. In *The Lady of Shalott* the scene changes to harmonize with the situation of the heroine ; in the *Idylls of the King* we find this device systematically followed ; the season of the year during which the action of each idyll is represented as taking place reflects and reinforces the pervading tone of that particular incident.

\*See Brimley's *Essay*, pp. 8 fol., from which the above sentences are quoted.

**Vocabulary and Phraseology.**—Passing on to an examination of more minute elements of his style, his vocabulary and phraseology, we find them characterized by the same care and discrimination, by the same seeking after picturesque effects and beauty ; we feel also the same sense of conscious artifice ; we note a constant indebtedness to the works of his predecessors, and a masterly skill in adapting for his own purposes the happy phrases and images which he has met in his reading.\* Tennyson, as has already been noted, is a versatile poet, and great variety of styles may be found in his collected works, - sometimes he is simple, sometimes realistic, but the manner most natural to him, which is most pervading, and most characteristic in his work, is a highly ornate one. It exhibits a richness and fulness of colour and imagery that is apt to withdraw the mind from the whole theme and outcome of a piece, to admiration and enjoyment of each passing phrase and image. The poet seems instinctively to select his theme so as to give scope for the exhibition of this quality, rather than for bringing home to the heart and imagination of the reader some profoundly human situation. The anguish of despised and deserted love is a subject for the highest poetry ; but it is not the anguish and sadness of the woman Oenone for which we chiefly care when we read Tennyson's poem, but the idyllic and classic surroundings of the mountain-nymph, the beauty of successive lines, pictures, and passages. *Morte d'Arthur* (masterpiece although it is) and all the Idylls win their power in a large measure from the same sources. For such purposes the simple and direct style is little suitable—the style where the words seem to come to the poet's pen unbidden, where the expression is so naturally the outcome of the idea as to be transparent, where the thought is so completely brought home to the imagination and heart that the manner is unnoticed.† In Tennyson's expression the artist is always felt ; the conscious perception of his skill is a large part of the pleasure. So in his diction, while he does not avoid the vocabulary of ordinary life which Wordsworth preferred, he on the whole prefers a word or phrase with distinctly poetic

\* Mr. Charlton Colton devotes a volume (*Illustrations of Tennyson*) to tracing such adaptations. Many cases are pointed out in the notes to this volume.

† "Tennyson's decorative art, his love of colour for its own sake, of music for its own sake, lead him at times into what must always seem to the highly cultivated sense extravagances of colour, an over-prosperity, a fish luxuriance, and into similar extravagances of sound. To put it briefly, he rarely loses his thought, as Wordsworth trusted it, to build for itself a natural home of expression. So much an artist was he that Nature could not speak his language, and hence the inevitable word is rarely heard in his poetry." (Dixon, *Primer of Tennyson*, pp. 53-4.)

associations. He employs the language of earlier poetry, obsolete and rare words, antiquated preterits and past participles, novel compounds, double-epithets.\* He thus wins a charm for his style, but it is not the charm of simplicity and directness, but of florid and elaborate beauty. Ingenious and picturesque periphrases supply the place of commonplace terms: so we find "the knightly growth that fringed [Arthur's] lips," "the azure pillars of the hearth" (smoke from chimneys), "moving isles of winter" (icebergs), "took a word and played upon it and made it two colours" (punned), "unclasp'd the wedded eagles of her belt," "nor fail in childward care" (care of children), etc. In this matter he is a follower of Keats, to whom of all English poets he owes most and whom he most resembles; but Tennyson manifests, after his earliest attempts at least, a moderation and good judgment which are his own. The pictorial character of his style is observable in the success with which he suggests the proper image by even a single word: "the ripple *washing* in the reeds," "the wild water *lapping* on the crag," "she *shrilling*, let me die," "creamy spray," "little breezes *dusk* and *shiver*."

The ever-silent spaces of the East  
*Far-folded* mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

—*Tithonus*.

Fiercely flies  
 The blast of North and East, and ice  
 Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,  
 And bristles all the brakes and thorns  
 To yon hard crescent, as she hangs  
 Above the wood which grides and clangs  
 Its leafless ribs and iron horns.

—*In Memoriam*, cvii.

Similarly we note the exquisite finish and picturesqueness of phrase: "the lucid interspace of world and world."

So dark a forethought rolled about his brain  
 As on a dull day in an ocean cave  
 The blind wave feeling round his long sea hall  
 In silence.

\* Such as *hest*, *marish*, *heaves*, *enow*, *adorn*, *anear*, *buscage*, *brevis*, *boughts*, *cate*, *to oar*, *rathe*, *turdon*, *treinance*, *tinct*, *brand*, *Paynim*, *scud*; *clomb*, *sware*, *spake*, *brake*, *foughten*; *brain-fierous*, *green-glimmering*, *sallow-rifted*, *strange-statued*, *crag-carven*, *ruby-budded*.

Of course such words form only a very small percentage, but it should be noted that a few scattered words of this character suffice to give the predominant effect to a passage, just as a few dialectic terms and forms suffice, in the best writers, to give the desired local or conversational colour.

Akin to this felicity of phrasing and this success in appropriating picturesque words, is his power of seizing on the minuter features of nature, and his skill in flashing them upon the inward eye. It is particularly in the minuteness and accuracy of his observation of nature, that his descriptions are differentiated from those of his predecessors :

In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell  
Divides three-fold to show the fruit within.

*—The Brook.*

With blasts that blow the poplar white.

—*In Memoriam*, lxxi.

And on these dews that drench the furze,  
And all the silvery passimers  
That tare it into green and gold.

—*Ibid.* xi.

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
And purpled are the mounted thorn,  
Or when the barren firs  
First show the snows of Meru,

—*Ibid.*, xci.

(See also preceding stanzas).

Till now the doubtful dark reveal'd  
The hills, the trees, where the child at ease,  
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees  
Laid their dark arms about the field.

—*Ibid.* xciv.

The steer forgot to graze  
And, where the hedgerow cuts the pathway, stood  
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,  
And lowing to his fellows.

The Gardener's Daughter.

Nigh upon the hour  
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,  
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams  
Of goodly supper in a distant pool.

"Truth and Lying."

**Lyrical expression of thought and feeling.** This skill in technique which we have been emphasizing, and the patient laboriousness and good judgment of Tennyson are qualities of wide application, and likely to give a measure of success in almost any sort of poetry which he might attempt. And indeed this success has in some measure followed the poet everywhere. In his dramas, for example, a species of art to which by universal admission, neither the poet's genius, nor the circumstances of his life, nor the conditions of his age were suited, the critics are disposed to wonder less at the defects exhibited than at

the excellence attained. Accordingly, to assertions which are true of Tennyson's work in general, it may often be possible to adduce striking exceptions. If we deny him the power of representing commonplace, contemporary men, or humour, we are confronted with *The Northern Farmer*; if playfulness, with *The Talking Oak*; if realistic tragic power, with *Rizpah*. Yet, while not denying the many shapes in which the poet's genius has shown itself, there are certain forms in which he manifestly is most completely at his ease, and certain kinds of poetry which we associate especially with him. In the first place, Tennyson excels in the lyric delineation of his own moods and feelings ; of this power, *In Memoriam* gives the fullest exemplar. Among these moods he has a unique gift for rendering vague, evanescent, subtle shades of feeling, so delicate as scarcely to be capable of direct expression in language ; but which may be adumbrated—by a method which we have already noted to be specially Tennyson's own—through the rhythm and music of the verse and through the use of external details. So the familiar song “Break, break, break” finds expression for dumb, wistful grief in the grey, dull scenery of the coast.\* “Tears, idle tears,” “Far, far away,” *Crossing the Bar*, “The splendour falls,” etc., furnish other masterly examples of the same power.

**Expression of feeling and thought through concrete pictures.—** In the second place, the poet excels in the *indirect* presentation of similar moods, feelings and thoughts through an objective situation or character. We have already called attention to this species of poetry in *Mariana*, but higher manifestations of this faculty are afforded by *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Morte d'Arthur*, *Merlin and the Gleam*. Here the traits of character, the details of scene or situation are selected not merely in order to produce an effective picture, although that is one object, but to body forth an inner experience. The poet himself has told us that this is true of the finest of these poems, *Ulysses*. He says, after speaking about *In Memoriam* : “There is more of myself in “Ulysses,” which was written under the sense of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end”

\* See Hutton's *Literary Essays*, p. 372, fol. : “Observe how the wash of the sea on the cold gray stones is used to prepare the mind for the feeling of helplessness with which the deeper emotions break against the hard and rigid element of human speech ; how the picture is then widened out till you see the bay with children laughing on its shore, and the sailor-boy singing on its surface, and the stately ships passing on in the offing to their unseen haven, all with the view of helping us to feel the contrast between the satisfied and unsatisfied yearnings of the human heart.”

(See article by Mr. Knowles, *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1893). Such a poem gives scope to the poet's pictorial faculty, yet it is imbued with a deeper meaning and intenser feeling which elevates it above mere description.\*

**His Idylls.**—In the third place, Tennyson's qualities lend themselves especially to, and have been repeatedly employed upon, still another poetic form, the Idyll. The name, which, like the thing, is derived from the Greeks, means 'a little picture.'† It was one of the latest literary forms to arise in Greek literature, and was developed in an era resembling our own, when to use Tennyson's language, all the great things had been done, and the poet's chance for going down the stream of time lay in brevity and finish. The word 'idyll,' therefore, (though like most poetic terms, it can only be vaguely defined) is applied to short poems of a pictorial character, couched in an elaborate and finished style, where the aim of the poet is rather to charm the aesthetic feelings by the beauty of the pictures suggested, and by the exquisite skill of the workmanship, than to move the heart by the greatness of the theme, or the truth and intensity of the delineation. In the development of poetry, grand and obvious subjects are likely to be treated first; and since these are themselves moving and beautiful, the poet cannot do better than bring them home, with the utmost vividness and truth, to the imagination of his readers; this he will best succeed in doing by the use of the simple, transparent, direct style. But when the great themes are exhausted, and the poets, in search of fresh matter, turn to trivial subjects, or subjects not wholly beautiful, or not intensely interesting and touching, they strive to make amends, for these deficiencies, by a style which gives pleasure in itself, by ornamentation which is beautiful and appropriate, but not absolutely needful for the presentation of the theme, and by idealizing with a view to aesthetic charm, rather than with a view to profound emotional effects. In *Oenone*, for example, Tennyson presents a subject

\* See Hutton, *Literary Essays*, p. 524, fol.: "Even when Tennyson's poems are uniformly moulded by an 'infused' seed, one not infrequently notices the excess of the faculty of vision over the governing conception which moulds the vision, so that I think he is almost always most successful when his poem begins in a thought or a feeling rather than from a picture or narrative, for then the thought or feeling dominates and controls his otherwise too lavish fancy. 'Ulysses' and 'Tithonus' are far superior to 'Oenone,' exquisite as the pictorial workmanship of 'Oenone' is. . . . Whenever Tennyson's pictorial fancy has had it in any degree in its power to run away with the guiding and controlling mind, the richness of the workmanship has to some extent overgrown the spiritual principle of his poems."

† See Stedman's *Victorian Poets*, chap. vi.

from Greek legend, unreal and remote to us, and therefore, however pathetic the situation represented, incapable of kindling our deepest sympathy. On the other hand, it is a subject full of æsthetic situations, affording ample scope for the display of sensuous beauty, and free from the commonplaceness and ugliness which must always cling to what is derived from our actual world. In other idylls, the poet does not go so far afield for a theme ; in *The Gardener's Daughter*, he takes contemporary life ; but again, he selects on the ground of beauty and charm, and excludes every trait which might interfere with these ; as a consequence, we may say, the picture is so idyllic, that we scarcely feel it to be actual and real. It does not stir the deeper feelings connected with love, as *Romeo and Juliet* does ; the poet makes no such attempt. Again, in *Enoch Arden* we have a theme intensely pathetic, taken from homely, actual English life ; yet the author does not depend mainly upon the genuine poetic power of his matter, does not treat it *simply*, as Wordsworth has treated a similar theme in *Michael* ; Tennyson's treatment is idyllic, and the actual characteristics of the story are lost in the gorgeous and alien ornament.\* Again the *Idylls of the King*, though in their final shape aiming at something beyond mere idyllic beauty, and bound into a larger unity, are yet on the basis of their general style and character, properly termed idylls. Their chief interest does not depend upon the loftiest elements that can enter into a work of art, the truthful and powerful presentation of human life and character ; they do not stir our sympathies and interest as these are stirred by the spectacle of actual existence. For notwithstanding the pathos and tragic force of occasional passages, we are, on the whole, drawn to the *Idylls of the King*, not by our sympathy with the personages, their sufferings and their destiny, but by enjoyment of the verse, by diction and imagery, by the charm of a picture more

\* See Bagehot's *Essay on Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning*. Mr. Bagehot happily cites, as an exaggerated example of this ornate style, the following passage, where the poet intentionally obscures and hides the real subject, viz., the peddling of fish (which is certainly not poetical) by quite extraneous details :

Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean spoil  
 In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,  
 Rough-reddened with a thousand winter gales,  
 Not only to the market-cross were known  
 But in the leafy lanes behind the down,  
 Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp  
 And peacock yew-tree of the lonely hall,  
 Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering.

romantic and sensuously beautiful than that afforded by the real world, Tennyson showed a certain shyness of the task of representing actual life as it is. The condition of society, manners, and thought in the *Idylls of the King* plainly did not exist at any period of the world's history. In *The Princess*, where the theme and central situation belongs essentially to the present day, where the character, thoughts, aims, pursuits of the heroine bear unmistakably the impress of the nineteenth century, the poet does not venture to give these a realistic setting; but with the aid of reminiscences from chivalry and the Middle Ages, constructs a wholly fanciful but very beautiful background for his picture. Some poets reveal the great and beautiful by penetrating beneath the superficial husk of the commonplace and ugly in life about us; others, like Keats and Tennyson, by casting about it an atmosphere of charm, a glamour of fancy. "It is the distance," said Tennyson, "that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate to-day in which I move." \*

In pointing out the fact that idyllic poetry is not of the highest order, we are neither contemning it nor disparaging Tennyson. In the domain of poetic art there are many mansions; the idyll has its place and functions. We do not always desire the grander, more profound, and therefore more exacting, art of *Othello* and *Lear*. At times we are glad to escape to the charm and beauty of a fanciful world, remote from those of our real experience. In the sort of poetry which soothes and charms, yields calm pleasure, and pure, innocent, innocent, delight, Tennyson is a master; and, in particular, he has almost identified the idyll in English literature with his own name.

**His longer works.**—One point in Tennyson's deliverance (see p. 134) on the conditions of poetry in his day, remains to be noted. Whether it is true or not that "all the big things had been done," it is unquestionably true in Tennyson's own case that he makes his mark "by shortness." Grandeur and grasp of conception, the ability to conceive a great whole which should be an effective artistic unit, was not his. That mental peculiarity which, as we have seen, inclined him to work from details upwards, rather than from the general conception downwards, is still more evident when we examine the structure of his more ambitious attempts. His longer poems are made by joining together smaller wholes; their unity is a second and added idea. In *In Memoriam*, there is, doubtless, a line of development, a connection in the

\* *Aspects of Tennyson*, in *Notes on Authors*, for January, 1883.

thoughts, and a unity of tone among the several lyrics ; they arise from a common germinal experience, they follow in natural sequence ; but they are not manifestly members of an organized body to whose beauty and completeness they contribute, and which would be maimed by their absence. They are scarcely more a whole, than the series of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* ; they are not a unit in the sense in which *Macbeth*, or *Othello*, or *Romeo and Juliet*, or *Paradise Lost* is a unit. Tennyson's remark as to the way in which *In Memoriam* was constructed is significant in this connection : "The general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space, I would put in a poem,"\* and might, apparently, be applied also to the *Idylls of the King* and to *Maud*. It is noteworthy with regard to the former—the most ambitious of his "big things"—that several of the parts were published before the whole was *clearly* conceived, if conceived at all (See notes on *Lancelot and Elaine*, p. 206); and that several other parts were added after the whole had been *apparently* completed. The unity is of the loosest kind ; there is no steady development of plot interest. Each idyll does not win its complete and deepest interest from its relation to the whole, as in the case with each scene of Shakespeare's plays, and each book of *Paradise Lost*. Again in *Maud*, the central and finest lyric "O that 'twere possible" was published long before *Maud* was written or dreamed of. It was a second thought to build around this a series of songs which should unfold a character and a story ; the poem affords no stringent standard by which we can say that each of these songs is, or is not necessary ; they might have been either more or fewer. What is of still greater importance : several of these songs—the one just referred to, for example—do not lose, but actually gain by being considered apart from the context, by being separated from the hysterical hero and his story. There remains (apart from the dramas) one other long work *The Princess* ; this *does* possess more of unity ; yet the poet himself is sensible of some incongruity in the structure ; and in order that his work may not be tried by the strictest standard of art, he imaginatively accounts for this defect by adding a prologue and epilogue which explain that *The Princess* is not to be treated as the conception of one mind, but as a story told by seven different narrators, and, in consequence, it "moves in a strange diagonal."† This apology for a lack of consistency is thrust into the foreground by the second title of the piece, "The Princess ; a Medley." To sum up, Tennyson's highest

\**Aspects of Tennyson*, by Knowles, in *Nineteenth Century* for Jan. 1893.

†See ll. 27-28 of the Conclusion to *The Princess*.

excellences do not arise from qualities which can be exhibited only in extensive poems upon great and broad themes, but from qualities which may also belong to short unambitious pieces. He requires neither the grandest sort of theme, nor a very extensive canvas to reveal the full power of his art.

**General character of Tennyson's thought.**—We have emphasized the adaptation of the peculiar endowments of Tennyson to the conditions and opportunities of poetic art in his day. These endowments have given him extraordinary excellence in technique ; Tennyson is one of the most versatile and perfect artists among English poets. Turning now from form to thought and matter, such rank can no longer be maintained for him. In those earliest pieces where we find the main characteristics of his technique (though as yet somewhat crude) abundantly present, we also observe, on the whole, comparative thinness of matter. Undoubtedly, as he grew older, and experience and knowledge increased, his work became much less purely pictorial and fanciful ; he infused more of human nature into his poems, dwelt less aloof in a world of fancy \* ; his sympathies widened, his heart was touched to deeper issues, and there was more of thought, of what Matthew Arnold calls 'the criticism of life'. A growing realism in the characters, and scenes depicted, and in the style employed, is especially noticeable in his later miscellaneous pieces beginning with the *Poems and Ballads* of 1850. But, after all, what gives Tennyson his high and unique place among the poets is, not power of thought, but power of form. He has no specially profound insight into character, or broad experience of life. His sensitive, shy, and, apparently, little genial nature, and the seclusion of his habits were not favourable to acquiring these. Nor is there any special originality in his ideas or in his attitude toward the facts of life. On the other hand, his receptive and active intelligence readily assimilated conceptions which were in the air ; his calm and sane judgment enabled him to seize them in their truer and more permanent aspects ; so that, while he makes no bold and original contributions to our store of ideas, no poet probably in the whole range of English literature has more fully and adequately voiced the thought and spirit of his own generation. This is another cause of his popularity. The ordinary reader is not repelled by ideas, or ways of viewing them, to which he is unaccustomed ; he finds the questions in which he is interested, and the current opinions in

\* Compare for example the fanciful and unreal, though exquisitely beautiful *Lady of Shalott*, with the more human story, made out of the same material, in *Lancelot and Elaine*.

regard to them. Fortunately for the poet, the age was fertile in novel and germinal conceptions, and he had rare skill in embodying these in poetic form without giving any sense of incongruity. His entrance upon his literary career was contemporaneous with the beginning of a marked epoch in intellectual and national progress.<sup>3</sup> In politics, the years of repression and stagnation which had originated in the dread of the French Revolution, and been prolonged by the struggle against Napoleon for national existence, began, about 1820, to yield before new forces in the political and intellectual world ; it was fully ushered in by the realization of Parliamentary Reform in 1832. It was an age of rapid change, of great national development, of extraordinary commercial and scientific progress, of political theories and reforms, of new movements in philosophy and religion, and, in its earlier part, of great hopefulness. The chief characteristics of this age are faithfully reflected in Tennyson's verse—its optimism, its enthusiasm for science its belief in the steady and rapid progress of social institutions towards perfection, its religious unrest, its new scientific ideas. But Tennyson outlived this epoch, as he outlived the greater number of his own contemporaries. In his old age he found many of the anticipations of his youth disappointed, he found himself amidst a generation exhibiting ultra-democratic and radical tendencies with which he could not sympathize,—he found the class to which he belonged by association and with

<sup>3</sup> “The very year of Tennyson's first volume [1830] was the year of the second French Revolution, and the second English revolution ; the year of the 'Three Days' in Paris, and of the appearance of Lord Grey as Prime Minister in England and champion of the Reform Bill. It was the year of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway. Mr. Huskisson, who met his death on that occasion, had recently brought forward the first notions of Free Trade, which the beginnings of steam navigation were soon to do much to develop. It was the year of Lyell's 'Principles of Geology,' and of Comte's 'Cours de Philosophie Positive.' Keble's 'Christian Year' had been printed in 1827 ; and in 1829 Catholic Emancipation had become law ; and forthwith O'Connell began to agitate for Repeal of the Union. The position of the Irish Church was called in question in 1831 ; and in the same year the Corn Law Rhymes of Ebenezer Elliott preached more powerfully than from any pulpit a new doctrine for the poor :

‘It is the deadly Power that makes  
Bread dear and labour cheap.’

At this time rick-burning was rife (To 'Mary Boyle,' viii, ix, x. Also 'The Princess,' iv, 363-367), and Hunt and Cobbett were filling the new-forming mind of the masses with ideas of social equality, while the most autocratic of European nations, 'that o'ergrown Barbarian in the East' was absorbing Poland. The year of Tennyson's second volume passed the Reform Bill, brought out 'Tracts for the Times,' proposed to emancipate slaves, saw Faraday's Experiments in Electricity, and heard George Combe's lecture on popular education.” (Luce's *Handbook to Tennyson*, pp. 12-13.)

which he sympathized in virtue of its ideals and the beauty of its actual life—the landed gentry—losing political influence, suffering from material loss, possibly destined to be crushed out of existence in the struggle of modern life. The consequence of this, and of the natural effects of old age, is a marked change in the tone of his writings; a loss of hopefulness, a growing bitterness with the existing condition of things.\*

**Tennyson's preference for middle positions.**—Tennyson was, however, not the mere creature of his age—a mirror to reflect indifferently each passing phase of thought. He had a pronounced personality of his own, which led him to find interest in some tendencies and to be unresponsive to others; to embody certain ideas with enthusiasm, and touch upon others only that he may testify his repugnance. We have already had occasion to mention a certain lack of ardour and impetuosity in the poet, calmness of temperament and self-control, sane judgment and good taste. Such qualities beget a constitutional preference for middle courses, a dislike of excess and extremes. We find, accordingly, Tennyson's sympathies are everywhere with moderate views: in politics, in religion, in the 'woman question,' etc. So, the slow and orderly development of the English nation, the self-restraint and spirit of compromise manifested in her history, the character of her existing institutions, the spirit in which the reforms of his own day were being carried out, were in harmony with the poet's nature, and inspired not a little of the fervour of the patriotic passages in his works. Even his aesthetic sense was satisfied with the venerable and orderly beauty of English institutions; just as he delighted to depict the embodiment of the same spirit and forces in the prevailing features of English landscape:

An English home-gray twilight pour'd  
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,  
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,  
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Crudity, excess, violence, offended both his aesthetic and his intellectual nature. He believed in progress, but it must be gradual. He was, as the three political poems included in this volume show, a liberal conservative, in the natural sense of the words. He had no sympathy with the radicalism of his times, with root-and-branch theories that demanded sudden and violent changes in institutions and conditions to which his heart was attached. He had the historic sense of his age; it was not

\*Compare the poem on *Freedom* with the political poems of 1833: "Love Thou Thy Land," etc.; and *Locksley Hall*, with *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

merely England as it existed, that he saw and loved ; it was England the embodiment of a long and unbroken development through the wise and heroic efforts of generations of Englishmen—England teeming with associations from a splendid past. But of the suffering and misery out of which came the radical theories that he disliked, he seems to have had no adequate sense, through limitations either of his sympathies or of his experience. He saw things too exclusively from the point of view of the country-gentleman—the class to which he was most closely bound, both by personal association, and by the beauty and charm of their life and its surroundings. But it was his good fortune, as far as immediate popularity was concerned, to be in thought and feeling the average educated Englishman ; though this also implied a narrowness, a lack of understanding of non-English conditions, of the point of view of other classes than his own, a want of sympathy with new social movements that, in turn, result in limitation and conventionality in his work.

**His ideals of character and conduct.**—As Tennyson's work is marked by good taste and moderation, as his character and life were exempt from marked eccentricities and departures from social conventions, and as his views were marked by a preference for middle courses ; so the ideals of character and conduct displayed in his poetry, exhibit kindred peculiarities. His King Arthur, the type of the highest manhood, is distinguished by his self-control, his good sense, his practical activity. When, in the *Holy Grail*, his knights ride away in pursuit of the Heavenly vision, the King remains at his post faithful to the more homely calls of life :

Seeing the King must guard  
That which he rules, and is but as the hind  
To whom a space of land is given to plow,  
Who may not wander from the allotted field  
Before his work be done.

The evils and disorder which are represented as the consequences of the quest of the Grail, show that the poet's sympathies are not with the mystical enthusiasm of Galahad, but with the more prosaic and practical aims of Arthur—the redressing of wrong, the improvement of the condition of the race.\* All that partakes of extravagance is

\* "With Mr. Tennyson the mystic is always the visionary who suffers from an over-excitable fancy. The nobler aspects of the mystical religious spirit are unrepresented in his poetry. We find nowhere among the persons of his imagination a Teresa, uniting as she did in so eminent a degree an administrative genius, a genius for action with the genius of exalted piety." (Dowden's *Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning*.)

foreign to his nature. Self-restrained characters are more to his taste than passionate ones. He does not succeed in depicting the latter class; the hero of *Maud* is morbid and excitable, not strong; does not exhibit the grand and imposing aspect of intense emotion. Tennyson's sympathies are with that thoroughly English ideal 'the gentleman'—an ideal where the controlling forces count for more than the impelling. The average Englishman admires the man who is strong to endure external shocks, who has his own nature well in hand, who severely restrains the exhibition even of perfectly innocent and laudable feelings; the demonstrativeness of the Frenchman and German, the passionate and effusive nature in general, have for him something effeminate. Here Tennyson and his audience are again at one. The rapturous and mystical communion with nature, which is the theme of Wordsworth's poetry, or the beauty and saving power of intense passion, of which Shelley and Browning are the apostles, meet no such ready response from Englishmen as the praise of self-restraint, of obedience to duty, of beneficent practical activity which are enshrined in Tennyson's writings. A disciplined nature wisely devoted to the practical work of improving society is Tennyson's highest ideal of life, the ideal he puts into the mouth of Athene—herself the incarnation of the wisdom and virtue which the Greek mind found in the mean:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.  
Yet not for power (power of herself  
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear;  
And, because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

Oh ! rest thee sure  
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,  
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,  
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a god's,  
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,  
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow  
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,  
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,  
Commeasure perfect freedom."

**His attitude towards the great questions.**—Closely akin to these pervading tendencies of Tennyson's nature is his admiration and reverence for law.\* This predominant trait of the poet's mind is revealed

\* See Dowden's *Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning* in *Studies in Literature*.

not only in the political sphere upon which we have already lightly touched, but comes out in the way in which he regards the whole universe. Here, again, Tennyson is fortunate in his sensitive appreciation for an aspect of nature which has been revealed with unprecedented clearness and force by the modern science. He shares here to the full the enthusiasm of the scientific investigator. Further, the scientific conception that the whole universe is the manifestation, not only of law, but also of orderly, slow, and regular development, was in harmony with the poet's mind and feeling. He early accepted the idea of development; it is to be found in *In Memoriam*. But while entering heartily into the scientific enthusiasm of his time, both because science improved the condition of man's life and because scientific conceptions commended themselves to his own intellect and feeling, he was always strenuously opposed to the purely materialistic and non-spiritual views of the universe to which science was supposed by some to lead. The arguments from external nature adduced against theistic and spiritual ideas, he always met, as in *In Memoriam*, by arguments from the inner consciousness.\* Akin to his rejection of materialism, is that strenuous adherence to the belief in immortality which comes out again and again in his poetry. It is interesting that the two greatest poets of the generation, Tennyson and Browning, should give such marked prominence to this matter in their works. But, apart from his conviction of spiritual and personal force in the universe, and of a personal immortality, Tennyson manifests the vagueness and doubt of his generation in regard to the great problems; and even the beliefs that he did maintain, he clings to rather than confidently maintains. This lack of strong convictions, of a message to convey, of ardent passion, of inspiration, his somewhat conventional and narrow range of sympathy, the elaboration of his style,—all contribute towards the sense that possesses the reader (notwithstanding all his admiration for the poet's work) that there is a something lacking, a want of force and of originality, which fails to put him in the very highest rank of poets. He soothes and eases rather than braces and inspires. He reflects our own thoughts rather than quickens us. He is a poet of beauty rather than of power.

*Select Bibliography.*—*Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* by his son (Macmillan & Co.). The Poetical Works are published in various forms by Macmillan, the most convenient being that in one vol., of which only the editions issued Sept. 1894 and later are complete.

\* See for example *In Memoriam*, cxxiv. See also on these points *Tennyson as the Poet of Evolution*, by Theodore Watts, in *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xxxiv.





Tennyson's College (Trinity, Cambridge).

To face p. 101.

Annotated editions of a large number of the poems are to be found in various volumes of Macmillan's *English Classics*; also of the *Idylls of the King* and a number of other poems in volumes ed. by Rolfe (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.); also miscellaneous selections of the poems edited for Canadian schools by Messrs. Wetherell, Burt, Sykes, and Libby; to these editions the present editor is indebted, especially to Rolfe's for variant readings. A large Tennyson literature is now in existence, of which a useful bibliography will be found in Dixon's *Primer of Tennyson* (Methuen, London, 1886)—not only essays but volumes dealing either with his work in general or with special poems, particularly with the *Idylls of the King* and *In Memoriam*. Among these, one of the best is Gwynn's *Tennyson* (Blackie, 1899); Dixon's *Primer*, already mentioned, contains useful information and a judicious view of the poet's genius; Luce's *Handbook to the Works of Alfred Tennyson* (Bell, London, 1895), besides a general survey of Tennyson's work, takes up each poem individually; Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life* (Isbister, London, 1894) contains a very full critical examination of Tennyson's work; of treatises on individual poems, we have MacCallum's *Tennyson's Idylls and Arthurian Story* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1894) mainly occupied by the history of these legends in literature, while Elsdale's *Studies in the Idylls* (Macmillan) and Littledale's *Essays on Tennyson's Idylls* are chiefly devoted with an examination and interpretation of the *Idylls* themselves; the articles on the *Idylls* in the *Contemporary Review* for Jan. 1870, and for May 1873, are based on the poet's own explanations; Dawson's *Study of the Princess* (Montreal, 1882), Genung's *In Memoriam* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), Gatty's *Key to In Memoriam* (Bell, London, 3rd ed. 1885), Rolfe's text of *In Memoriam*, with notes, King's *In Memoriam* (Morang, Toronto). For various readings and development of the text, Nicoll's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. II (Routledge and Stoughton), and Jones' *Growth of the Idylls of the King* (Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1895); Churton Collins' *Illustrations of Tennyson* (Chatto and Windus, 1891) gathers illustrations and originals from Greek, etc. Critical essays: in Stedman's *Victorian Poets* (Houghton, Mifflin), in Brimley's *Essays* (Macmillan), Hutton's *Literary Essays* (Macmillan), Bayhot's *Literary Studies* (Longmans), Dowden's *Studies in Literature* (Kegan Paul), Ward's *English Poets* by Jebb, articles in the *Nineteenth Century* for 1893, etc.

---

## THE POET.

Published in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, 1830. This poem describes, in metaphorical guise, the work and influence of the true poet. It will be noted that it is not the artistic side of the poet's work that is emphasized—his power to create what is beautiful,—but his prophetic office, his power to seize and proclaim truth and stimulate men to higher effort. The *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1831, sums up the leading ideas of this poem as to the function of the poets: "They can influence the association of unnumbered hearts; they can disseminate principles; they can give those principles power over men's imaginations; they can excite in a good cause the sustained enthusiasm that is sure to conquer; they can blast the laurels of tyrants, and hallow the memories of the martyrs of patriotism; they can act with a force, the extent of which it is difficult to estimate, upon national feelings and character, and consequently upon national happiness" (*Quoted by Prof. Sykes*).

1. **golden.** This adjective is often used in poetry to indicate, somewhat vaguely, rare beauty and perfection; its special application here may have been suggested by its use in the common phrase "the golden age."

2. The natural meaning would seem to be that the poet hates hatred, loves love, etc. But it has also been suggested, very improbably, that "hate of hate" is a superlative, meaning intense hatred; or again, that the poet is hated by those who hate, loved by those who love, etc.

5-8. He is a *seer*; he penetrates into the inner meaning of things.

7. **everlasting will.** cf. *In Memoriam*, cxxxii :

O living will that shall endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock.

Tennyson explained "will" in this quotation "as that which we know as Free-will, the higher and enduring part of man" (*Life*, I., p. 319). "Free-will was undoubtedly, he said, the 'main miracle.'" "Free-will and its relation to the meaning of human life and to circumstance was latterly one of his most common subjects of conversation" (*Life*, I., p. 316).

9-10. He attains the most difficult and inaccessible paths which lead to fame. The epithet 'echoing' may be intended to suggest his loneliness in these paths; only the select few reach such heights; or it may

symbolize the fact that some message from these remote excursions of his spirit come back to ordinary men.

11. **viewless.** Invisible ; cf. Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, iii., 1 : "To be imprisoned in the viewless winds."

13. Certain Indian tribes of South America blow from a tube eight to twelve feet long poisoned arrows, and are able to kill game and men at a considerable distance.

15. **Calpe.** The ancient name for Gibraltar, one of the two pillars (the southern one was Abyla) which Hercules was fabled to have erected on each side of the exit from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. As these pillars long marked the western limit of the world familiar to the Greeks, as did Mount Caucasus the eastern limit, so from Calpe to Caucasus means from one side of the world to the other.

19. **the field flower.** Presumably the dandelion ; see l. 24 below.

21-24. The message of the poet takes root in the minds of others, who, in turn, are agents to spread his teachings.

27. **breathing.** Full of life.

29. The image in the writer's mind is that of planets obtaining their light from the sun.

31-32. New and higher ideals arise in the minds of men.

36. **rare.** Exquisitely beautiful ; cf. Scott's *Proud Maisie*.

Sweet Robin sits on the bush  
Singing so *rarely*.

41-42. There is no violence and bloodshed in this revolution, outworn institutions are gradually displaced, "melt like snow." Tennyson's desire for gradual progress and his detestation of violent revolutions is everywhere apparent in his work ; cf. "You ask me why," stanzas 3-4, and "Love thou thy land."

46. **Wisdom.** For Tennyson's conception of Wisdom, see *In Memoriam*, exiv., where the superiority of wisdom to knowledge is emphasized.—knowledge is rash and impetuous and must submit to the restraining guidance of wisdom, who is "heavenly of the soul," while knowledge is "earthly of the mind."

## THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

First published in 1832, but, as the notes show, the poem has been greatly improved by later revision. It is the first work which Tennyson based upon Arthurian legends ; in this case contained, according to Palgrave, in an Italian novel (see note on l. 9). *Lancelot and Elaine* is a very different treatment of the same story where the interest is more human and the motives and characters perfectly comprehensible. Here we have a beautiful series of pictures presenting part of the history of a mysterious being, involved in a strange fate. This mystery of the poem suggests symbolism, to which the poet was inclined, as, for example, in *The Palace of Art* and the *Idylls of the King* ; so Mr. Hutton seems to think that the history of the poet's own genius is shadowed forth, which "was sick of the magic of fancy and its picture-shadows, and was turning away from them to the poetry of human life." While Mr. Alfred Ainger (as quoted by Mr. Sykes) says : "The key to this wonderful tale of magic, and yet of deep human significance, is to be found, perhaps, in the lines :

Or when the moon was overhead  
Came two young lovers lately wed ;  
'I am half sick of shadows' said  
The Lady of Shalott.

The new-born love of something, for some one, in the wide world from which she has been so long excluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities. The curse is the anguish of unrequited love. The shock of her disappointment kills her." Mr. Ainger's interpretation was derived from the poet himself ; but it was doubtless the picturesque aspects of the subject, rather than any deep human significance that attracted and occupied the poet.

3. **wold.** 'Open country.' The landscape the poet was most familiar with at this time was the landscape of Lincolnshire. According to the *Century Dictionary* "The wolds of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire are high rolling districts, bare of trees and exactly similar to the downs of the southern part of England." The word appears in *Lear*, iii, 4, in the form "old."

**meet the sky.** Note how suggestive is the phrase of the wide uninterrupted prospect.

5. **many-tower'd Camelot.** Camelot is the capital of Arthur's domain, identified with Winchester by Malory (Bk. II, chap. xix) ; but

in Tennyson's treatment of the Arthurian legends, the scenes and geography are wholly imaginary, and the poet seems purposely to shun any touch which might serve to connect his scenes with actual localities.

In *Gareth and Lynette* we have a description of Camelot :

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces  
And stately, rich in emblem and the work  
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone ;  
Which Merlin's hand, the mage at Arthur's court,  
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere  
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak  
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.

6-9. In the edition of 1832, these lines read—

The yellow-leavèd waterlily,  
The green-sheathèd daffodilly,  
Tremble in the water chilly,  
Round about Shalott.

9. **Shalott.** This form of the name is probably suggested by Italian original *Domus di Scialotta*. In the *Idylls of the King*, 'Astolat,' the form used by Malory, is employed.

10-12. In 1832 the reading was—

Willows whiten, aspens shiver,  
The sunbeam-showers break and quiver  
In the stream that runneth ever.

10. **Willows whiten** through the breeze exposing the lower and lighter side of the willow leaves.

11. **dusk** and **shiver**. The darkening is due to the breaking up of the smooth surface of the water so that it no longer reflects the light.

19. The following two stanzas stood in the ed. of 1832 :—

Underneath the bearded barley,  
The reaper, reaping late and early,  
Hears her ever chanting cheerly,  
Like an angel, singing early,  
O'er the stream of Camelot.  
Piling the sheaves in furrows airy,  
Beneath the moon, the reaper weary  
Listening whispers, 'tis the fairy  
Lady of Shalott.'  
The little isle is all inralled  
With a rose fence, and overralled

With roses: by the marge unhailed  
 The shallop flitteth silksailed,  
     Skimming down to Camelot.  
 A pearl garland winds her head:  
 She leaneth on a velvet bed,  
     Full royally apparellèd  
     The Lady of Shalott.

It will be noted that, in his second version, the poet gains the great advantage of indicating the *aloofness* of the mysterious heroine,—a prime point in the story—of which, as it originally stood, there was no indication in Pt. I.; the picture of the barges, etc., serves to intensify this by contrast. The vague echoes of song are in much better keeping with all the traits of the Lady of Shalott than the phrase, ‘like an angel, singing clearly.’

37. In the ed. of 1832:—

No time hath she to sport and play:  
 A charmèd web she weaves alway.  
 A curse is on her if she stay  
     Her weaving, either night or day,  
     To look down to Camelot.  
 She knows not what that curse may be;  
 Therefore she weaveth steadily,  
 Therefore no other care has she,  
     The Lady of Shalott.  
 She lives with little joy or fear,  
 Over the water, running near,  
 The sheepbell tinkles in her ear,  
 Before her hangs a mirror clear,  
     Reflecting towered Camelot.  
 And as the mazy web she whirls,  
 She sees the surly village churls, etc.

56. **pad.** ‘An easy paced horse’ (etymologically connected with *path*).

64. **still.** ‘Always,’ ‘ever.’

76. **greaves.** ‘Armor to protect the shins.’

82. **free.** The bridle was held with a slack hand.

84. **Galaxy.** The Milky Way (from Gk. γάλα γάλακτος, milk).

86. **to.** In ed. of 1832 “from”; so also l. 104.

87. **blazon'd.** ‘Ornamented with heraldic devices.’

**baldrick.** ‘A belt worn over one shoulder and crossing the breast.’

91. **All.** Cf. Coleridge, *Ancient Mariner*:

All in a hot and copper sky,  
 The bloody sun at noon,  
 Right up above the mast did stand, etc.

98. **bearded meteor.** The beard is, of course, what could be more prosaically described as the 'tail.'

99. **still.** In ed. of 1832, "green."

101. **hooves.** Archaic plural.

107. **by the river.** In ed. of 1832, "tirra lirra."

111. **water-lily.** In ed. of 1832, "water flower."

115. The mirror reflects both Lancelot on the bank, and his image in the water.

119. Note how throughout the poem, the season of the year and the weather are made to harmonize with the events of the story; the same device is adopted in the *Llys of the King*; see p. 140 of this volume.

123-126. In the ed. of 1832—

Outside the isle a shallow boat  
 Beneath the willow lay afloat,  
 Below the carven stern she wrote  
*The Lady of Shalott.*

Then followed a stanza which has been omitted—

A cloudwhite crown of pearl she dight  
 All raimented in snowy white  
 That loosely flew (her zone in sight,  
 Clasped with one blinding diamond bright)  
 Her wide eyes fixed on Camelot.  
 Though the squally east wind keenly  
 Blew, with folded arms serenely  
 By the water stood she queenly  
*Lady of Shalott.*

127. In the ed. of 1832—

With a steady stony glance—  
 Like some bold seer in a trance,  
 Beholding all his own mischance,  
 Mute, with glassy countenance—  
 She looked down to Camelot.  
 It was the closing, etc.

## 136. In the ed. of 1832—

As when to sailors while they roam,  
 By creeks and outfalls far from home,  
 Rising and dropping with the foam,  
 From dying swans wild warblings come,  
 Blown shoreward ; so to Camelot  
 Still as the boat-head wound along  
 The willowy hills and fields among,  
 They heard her chanting her death song,  
 The Lady of Shalott.

## 145. In 1832—

A long drawn carol, mournful, holy,  
 She chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
 Till her eyes were darkened wholly,  
 And her smooth face sharpened slowly, etc.

## 156. In 1832—

A pale, pale corpse she floated by,  
 Dead cold, between the houses high,  
 Dead into towered Camelot.  
 Knight and burgher, lord and dame,  
 To the plankèd wharfage came :  
 Below the stern they read her name,  
 'The Lady of Shalott.'

They crossed themselves, their stars they blest,  
 Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire, and guest.  
 There lay a parchment on her breast,  
 That puzzled more than all the rest,  
 The well fed wits of Camelot.  
 'The web was woven curiously,  
 The charm is broken utterly,  
 Draw near and fear not—this is I  
 The Lady of Shalott.

It will be noted how great is the improvement made by the changes in the original version ; particularly the poem gains in unity by the omission of needless details, or of details not in perfect keeping with the general effect, e.g.: the stanza beginning 'As when to sailors,' etc.; the dwelling on unpleasing aspects of death (stanza next to the last), which mars the simple beauty and impressiveness of the appearance of the dead Lady ; above all, the introduction of Lancelot in the closing lines affords a wholly new and effective picture.

## 165. royal cheer. The gaiety at the banquet in the palace.

## OENONE.

First printed in the volume of 1832 : but, in parts, greatly altered and improved since. It is the first of the Tennysonian *Idylls* proper—a form imitating in general character and in style the works of Theocritus, a Greek poet of the Alexandrian period (see p. 145 of this volume and Stedman's *Victorian Poets*, chap. vi.). Further, it is an example of Tennyson's practice of infusing a modern spirit into a classical theme. The latter affords a picturesque framework with opportunities for beautiful details to charm the imaginative vision and gratify the aesthetic taste ; the former gives elevation, and profounder interest and significance to the subject. In the present poem the combination is not so complete and successful as in some other poems (*Ulysses*, for example) being chiefly found in Athene's speech, but the theme is brought closer to the reader's sympathies by the pathetic interest of the situation.

1-29. In the ed. of 1832, the following is the reading :

There is a dale in Ida, lovelier  
 Than any in old Ionia, beautiful  
 With emerald slopes of sunny sward, that lean  
 Above the loud glenriver, which hath worn  
 A path thro' steepdown granite walls below  
 Mantled with flowering tendriltwine. In front  
 The cedar shadowy valleys open wide.  
 Far seen, high over all the Godbuilt wall  
 And many a snowy-columned range divine,  
 Mounted with awful sculptures—men and Gods,  
 The work of Gods—bright on a dark'ne sky  
 The windy citadel of Ilion  
 Shone, like the crown of Troas. Hither came  
 Mournful Oenone, wandering forlorn  
 Of Paris, once her playmate. Round her neck,  
 Her neck all marblewhite and marblecold,  
 Flew her hair or seemed to float in rest.  
 She, leaning on a vine-entwined stone,  
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shadow  
 Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.  
  
 O mother Ida, manyfountained Ida,  
 Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass,  
 The lizard with his shadow on the stone,  
 Sleeps like a shadow, and the scarletwinged  
 Cicada in the noonday leapeth not.  
 Along the water-rounded granite-rock  
 The purple flower droops : the golden bee, etc.

Mr. Stopford Brooke says (p. 87): "To compare the first draft of *Oenone* with the second, is not only to receive a useful lesson in the art of poetry—it is also to understand, far better than by any analysis of his life, a great part of Tennyson's character; his impatience for perfection, his steadiness in pursuit of it, his power of taking pains, the long intellectual consideration he gave to matters which originated in the emotions, his love of balancing this and that form of his thought against one another; and finally, correlative with these qualities, his want of impulse and rush in song, as in life." Mr. Brooke quotes (p. 113) the first thirteen lines of the 1832 version given above and remarks: "The blank verse halts; a hurly-burly of vowels like 'Than any in old Ionia' is a sorrowful thing; there is no careful composition of the picture; the things described have not that vital connection one with the other which should enable the imaginative eye to follow them step by step down the valley till it opens on the plain where Troy stands white, below its citadel." He then quotes the passage as it stands in the later editions, and comments: "The verse is now weighty and poised, and nobly paused—yet it moves swiftly enough. The landscape is now absolutely clear, and it is partly done by cautious additions to the original sketch. . . . Nothing can image better the actual thing than that phrase concerning a lonely peak at dawn, that 'it takes the morning'; nor the lifting and slow absorption of the mists of night when the sun slants warm into the pines of the glen, than those slow-wrought, concentrated lines about the mountain vapour."

1. This opening description is said to have been suggested by what the poet saw in the Pyrenees, which he visited in the autumn of 1831. See the note on *In the Valley of Cauteretz*, p. 132.

**Ida.** The mountain chain to the south of the district of Troas.

**Ionian.** Ionia was the name applied to a narrow strip of the coast of Asia Minor from the river Hermus, on the north, to the Meander, on the south.

3-5. Those who have seen the movements of mist on the mountains will appreciate the felicity of this description.

10. **topmost Gargarus.** The summit of Gargarus; a Latin idiom, cf. "summus mons." *Gargarus* is one of the highest peaks in Ida, some 5,000 feet above the sea.

11. **takes the morning.** "Catches the first rays of the rising sun."

13. **Ilion.** Troy.

15-16. **forlorn Of Paris.** Bereft of Paris; cf. *Par. Lost*, x, 921: "Forlorn of thee."

20. fragment of rock (see the corresponding line in the version of 1832).

21-22. Until the sun had sunk so low that the shadow of the mountain reached the place where Oenone was sitting.

23-24. A refrain repeated at intervals through the poem, is a frequent peculiarity of Greek idylls ; cf. Theocritus, i. and ii., Moschus, *Epitaph*; the same device is found in Spenser, *Prothalamium*, and Pope, *Pastorals*, iii., etc.

24. many-fountain'd Ida, an exact translation of Homer, *Iliad*, viii., 47 : 'Ιδης πολύπηδακα.

25. Tennyson is indebted for many hints to the Greek Idyllic poets (see Stedman's *Victorian Poets*). Line 25, translation of Callimachus' *Laracrum Palladis*: μσαμβρινὰ δειχ' ὄρος ἀστυν. (Collins' *Illustrations of Tennyson*.)

27. Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* vii., 22 : ἀνίκα δὴ καὶ σαῦρος ἐφ' αἰγασταῖσι καθεῖσι (When, indeed, the lizard is sleeping on the wall of loose stones).

28-29. and the winds are dead. The purple flower droops. The earlier reading was "and the cicala sleeps. The purple flowers droop." This present reading was not introduced until 1884.

30. Cf. *Henry VI.*, Part II., ii. 3 : " Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief."

37. cold crown'd snake. Theocritus speaks of the *cold* snake ; "crown'd" refers to its crest or hood. The resemblance of the crest to a crown is the probable origin of the name "basilisk," which is a diminutive formed from the Gk. word for 'king.'

38 a River-God. According to the myth, this river-god was Kebren (Κεβρῆν).

40-42. According to the myth, the walls of Troy rose under the influence of Apollo's lyre (see Ovid, *Heroides*, xv., 179) ; cf. *Tithonus*,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing  
While Iliion like a mist rose into towers.

Cf. also the building of Pandemonium in *Par. Lost*, i., 710.

51. white-hooved. The usual form would be "white-hoofed" ; cf. 'hooves' for 'hoofs' in *Lady of Shalott*, 101.

52. Simois. One of the rivers of Troas.

53-127. Originally this passage read :

“ ‘ O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
 I sate alone : the goldensandalled morn  
 Rosehued the scornful hills : I sate alone  
 With downdropt eyes : whitebreasted like a star  
 Fronting the dawn he came : a leopard skin  
 From his white shoulder drooped : his sunny hair  
 Clustered about his temples like a God’s :  
 And his cheek brightened, as the foambow brightens  
 When the wind blows the foam ; and I called out,  
 “ Welcome, Apollo, welcome home, Apollo,  
 Apollo, my Apollo, loved Apollo.”

“ ‘ Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
 He, mildly smiling, in his milkwhite palm  
 Close-held a golden apple, lightningbright  
 With changeful flashes, dropt with dew of Heaven  
 Ambrosially smelling. From his lip,  
 Curved crimson, the fullflowing river of speech  
 Came down upon my heart.

“ ‘ My own (Enone,  
 Beautifulbrowed (Enone, mine own soul,  
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav’n  
 ‘ For the most fair’ in aftertime may breed  
 Deep evilwilledness of heaven and sere  
 Heartburning toward hallowed Ilion ;  
 And all the colour of my afterlife  
 Will be the shadow of today. Today  
 Here and Pallas and the floating grace  
 Of laughterloving Aphrodite meet  
 In manyfolded Ida to receive  
 This meed of beauty, she to whom my hand  
 Award the palm. Within the green hillside,  
 Under yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,  
 Is an ingoing grotto, strown with spar  
 And ivymatted at the mouth, wherein  
 Thou un beholden mayst behold, unheard  
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.”

“ ‘ Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
 It was the deep midnoon : one silvery cloud  
 Had lost his way between the piney hills.  
 They came — all three — the Olympian Goddesses :  
 Naked they came to the smoothswarded bower,  
 Lustrous with lilyflower, violeteyed  
 Both white and blue, with lotetree-fruit thickset  
 Shadowed with singing pine ; and all the while,  
 Above, the overwandering ivy and vine,  
 This way and that in many a wild festoon  
 Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs

With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.  
 On the treetops a golden glorious cloud  
 Leaned, slowly dropping down ambrosial dew.  
 How beautiful they were, too beautiful  
 To look upon! but Paris was to me  
 More lovelier than all the world beside.

“‘O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
 First spake the imperial Olympian  
 With archèd eyebrow smiling sovrainly,  
 Fulleyèd Here. She to Paris made  
 Proffer of royal power, ample rule  
 Unquestioned, overflowing revenue  
 Wherewith to embellish state. “from many a vale  
 And riversundered champaign clothed with corn,  
 Or upland glebe wealthy in oil and wine—  
 Honour and homage, tribute, tax and toll,  
 From many an inland town and haven large,  
 Mast-thronged below her shadowing citadel  
 In glassy bays among her tallest towers.”

“‘O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
 Still she spake on and still she spake of power  
 “Which in all action is the end of all.  
 Power fitted to the season, measured by  
 The height of the general feeling, wisdomborn  
 And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns  
 Alliance and allegiance evermore.  
 Such boon from me Heaven’s Queen to thee kingborn,” etc.

48. **lawn.** Originally meant a clearing in a wood, then a meadow; cf. *Lycidas*, l. 25.

55. **solitary morning.** Refers to the remoteness and aloofness of the first rays of direct light from the sun.

57. The light of a star becomes pale and white in the dawn. Cf. *The Princess*, iii., 1: “morn in the white wake of the morning star,” and *Marriage of Geraint*, 734: “the white and glittering star of morn.”

61-62. The wind carries the spray into the air, and the increased number of watery particles which break up the rays of light, intensify the colour. To such rainbows Tennyson refers in *Sea-Fairies*, and in *Princess*, v., 308:

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest  
 Foam of noon’s day is.

66. In the fabulous gardens of the Hesperides at the western limit of the world were certain famous golden apples, which it was one of the labours of Hercules to obtain.

67. Ambrosia was the food of the Greek gods.

74. whatever Oread haunt. Imitation of a classical construction= 'any Oread that haunts.' *Oread* means 'mountain-nymph.'

76. married brows. "Eyebrows that meet," considered a great beauty by the Greeks. Cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* viii., 72: *σύνοφρος λόρα* ('the maid of the meeting eyebrows').

80. full-faced, according to Rowe and Webb, "'not a face being absent,' or perhaps also in allusion to the majestic brows of the Gods." But the reference seems rather to be to the fact that the apple was cast *full in the face of all the Gods*. The picture presented by the words "When all—Peleus" is that of the Olympian gods facing the spectator in a long row.

81. Ranged= 'were placed in order.' Cf. *Princess*, iii., 101-2:

and gained  
The terrace ranged along the northern front.

84. Delivering. For this use of the word compare *Richard II.*, iii., 3:

Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle  
Into his ruin'd ears, and thus deliver, etc.

95-98. Suggested doubtless by *Iliad*, xiv., 347-9:

τοῖσι δὲπὸ χθῶν δῖα φύεν νεοθηλέα ποίην  
λωτόν θερσήντα ιδὲ κρόκον ἥδινάκιτθον  
πυκνὸν καὶ μαλακόν.

('And beneath them the divine earth caused to spring up fresh new grass, and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth thick and soft').

Cf. also *Par. Lost*, iv., 710, fol.

96. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxxxiii.: "Laburnums, dropping wells of fire."

97. amaracus, and asphodel. Greek names of flowers; the former identified by some with sweet marjoram, the latter is a species of lily. In *Odyssey* ii., 539, the shades of the heroes are represented as haunting an asphodel meadow.

104. The crested peacock was sacred to Here (Juno).

105-106. Cf. *Iliad*, xiv., 350-351:—

ἐπὶ δὲ νεφέλην ἔσσαντο  
καλὴν χρυσεῖην στιλπναὶ δ' ἀπέπιπτον ἔερσατ

('And they were clothed over with a cloud beauteous, golden; and from it kept falling glittering dew-drops').

124. **throned of wisdom.** 'Power which has been attained, and is maintained by wisdom.'

128. Paris was the son of Priam, King of Troy ; but as a dream of his mother, Hecuba, indicated that the child was to bring misfortune to the city, he was exposed on Mount Ida, where he was found by a shepherd, who brought the boy up as his own son.

131. Cf. *Lucretius*, iii., 18, and the conclusion of *The Lotos-Eaters*.

137. **Flatter'd his spirit.** 'Charmed his spirit' ; cf. *Maud*, xiv., iii. : "The fancy flatter'd my mind."

139-140. 'With the spear athwart, or across, her shoulders.'

144-150. The sentiment of these five lines is characteristic of Tennyson and his work. He is the poet of self-control, moderation, duty, law, as his work is the manifestation of these very qualities ; in these respects both his theory and practice are the very opposite of some of the most poetical natures,—of Shelley, for example, with his ardour and passion. See pp. 151-2 of this volume ; also Dowden's *Studies in Literature* for a contrast between Tennyson and Browning in this regard.

144-167. In the edition of 1832, Pallas' speech read as follows :—

" Selfreverence, selfknowledge, selfcontrol  
 Are the three hinges of the gates of Life,  
 That open into power, everyway  
 Without horizon, bound or shadow or cloud.  
 Yet not for power (power of herself  
 Will come uncalled for) but to live by law,  
 Acting the law we live by without fear,  
 And because right is right, to follow right  
 Were wisdom, in the scorn of consequence.  
 (Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.)  
 Not as men value gold because it tricks  
 And blazons outward life with ornament,  
 But rather as the miser, for itself.  
 Good for selfgood doth half destroy selfgood.  
 The means and end, like two coiled snakes, infect  
 Each other, bound in one with hateful love.  
 So both into the fountain and the stream  
 A drop of poison falls. Come hearken to me,  
 And look upon me and consider me,  
 So shalt thou find me fairest, so endurance  
 Like to an athlete's arm, shall still become  
 Sinew'd with motion, till thine active will

(As the dark body of the Sun robed round  
With his own ever-emanating lights)  
Be flooded o'er with her own effluences,  
And thereby grown to freedom."

144, fol. Cf. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, ll. 201, fol.

153. **Sequel of guerdon.** 'A reward to follow,' 'the addition of a reward.'

164-165. **grow Sinew'd with.** 'Become strengthened by.'

165-167. 'The mature will, having passed through all kinds of experience, and having come to be identical with law (or duty) is commensurate with perfect freedom.' To the truly disciplined will, obedience to law or duty is perfect freedom, because that is all that the perfected will desires; cf. the phrase in the Collect for Peace in the *Book of Common Prayer*, "O God . . . whose service is perfect freedom."

171. There is of course a play on the two senses of "hear," 'to apprehend by the ears' and 'to give heed to.'

172-182. In the edition of 1832 this passage read:—

"Idalian Aphrodite oceanborn,  
Fresh as the foam, newbathed in Paphian wells,  
With rosy slender fingers upward drew  
From her warm brow and bosom her dark hair  
Fragrant and thick, and on her head upbound  
In a purple band: below her lucid neck  
Shone ivorylike, and from the ground her foot  
Gleamed rosywhite, and o'er her rounded form  
Between the shadows of the vinebunches  
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved."

174. **Idalian.** So called from Idalium, a mountain city in Cyprus, reputed to be one of her favourite haunts.

175. According to the myth, Aphrodite was born of the foam of the sea. *Paphos* was a city in Cyprus where she first landed after her birth from the waves.

178. **Ambrosial.** The epithet is often applied by Homer to the hair of the gods, and to other things belonging to them. It may refer here to the fragrance of the hair.

187. This was Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Lacedaemon. Paris subsequently carried her off, and this was the cause of the Trojan war, and the destruction of Troy itself.

189-191. In the ed. of 1882:

I only saw my Paris raise his arm,  
I only saw great Helen's angry eyes.

208. In order to build ships for Paris' expedition to Greece, where he was to carry off Helen.

219. **trembling.** Refers to the *trembling* of the stars.

222. **fragments.** Cf. on l. 20 above.

224. **The Abominable.** Eris, the goddess of strife.

245-50. She has vague premonitions of the evils to befall the city of Troy in consequence of Paris' winning the fairest wife in Greece.

258. **their** refers to Paris and Helen.

263. **Cassandra**, daughter of Priam, upon whom Apollo bestowed the gift of prophecy, with the drawback that her prophecies should never be believed. Accordingly, when she prophesied the siege and destruction of Troy, they shut her up in prison as a mad woman.

264. **A fire dances before her.** In Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1256, Cassandra exclaims: τετελε, οἰοτε, τίπειτο πειρατεῖον ('Ah me, the fire, how it comes upon me now').

---

## THE EPIC.

### AND THE EPILOGUE (ll. 273-303).

The lines under *The Epic* were written by the poet merely as an introduction to the *Morte d'Arthur*. The abrupt opening and fragmentary character of the latter poem seemed to need an explanation, just as certain peculiarities of the story of *The Princess* require an explanation, and in both cases Tennyson makes use of a setting—a prologue and epilogue. Lines 27-28 need not be taken as literally true of Tennyson; it is extremely unlikely that he had written twelve books on the story of Arthur, but they do indicate that *Morte d'Arthur* is only portion of a larger scheme which was subsequently realized in *Idylls of the King*. Mrs. Ritchie quotes Tennyson as saying: "When I was twenty-four, I meant to write a whole great poem on it (the Arthurian story), and began it in the *Morte d'Arthur*. I said

I should do it in twenty years but the reviews stopped me. By Arthur I always meant the soul, and by the Round Table the passions and capacities of man. There is no grander subject in the world than King Arthur." Here the poet, besides telling that, when he wrote *Morte d'Arthur*, he had the larger scheme in his mind, also asserts the symbolic nature of the poem; and this is a point to which *The Epic* and epilogue before us draw attention. The imaginary audience in *The Epic* are interested in the most modern questions, 'geology and schism,' etc., and old things are passing away. This is true also of Tennyson's real audience and the real world. To such an audience the poet comes with a story from old 'heroic times,' fashioned after the manner of the father of poetry, Homer; what interest can it have for them? The answer is hinted at, in the epilogue (276, fol.); Tennyson insinuates (modesty forbids him to put his claim openly): first, that there is perhaps a certain charm in the style (a charm which every reader will grant); second, that there is something of modern thought in the poem—it is not a mere description of external events as Homer's account would have been, but contains something of a deeper significance. In the dream (288, fol.) Tennyson gives a further hint that some, at least, of these "modern touches" are conveyed through symbolism. Arthur according to the old story was to come again; he did not really die. The poet seizes upon this to point the moral of his tale, which is contained in lines 240-241:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways.

His hearers say the old honour is gone from Christmas (*The Epic*, l. 7), there is a general decay in faith (l. 18); the poet substantially answers: "Not so, your decay is not real decay, but change, development. The old ideals pass away, but only to give place to higher ones; the old English ideal, King Arthur, has gone, but reappears in nobler form—the 'modern gentleman'; and so we can confidently anticipate in future generations (297, fol.) a continual progress to perfection." *The Epic* opens with the lament that Christmas is gone, but the Epilogue closes with the ringing of bells that announce that Christmas still exists; old customs connected with it may indeed be passing away, but the real essence of the Christmas festival still abides. One may compare the well-known lyric from *In Memoriam*, "Ring out wild bells" (cvi):

Ring out a slowly dying cause  
 And ancient forms of party strife ;  
 Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
 With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;  
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;  
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
 Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
 The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;  
 Ring out the darkness of the land,  
 Ring in the Christ that is to be.

*Morte d'Arthur* therefore represents some of the most characteristic aspects of the poet's thought (as well as the most characteristic beauties of his style)—his faith in human progress, his belief in development,—in a slow and steady development in which the old does not pass away, but reshapes itself to new forms in accordance with new conditions.

3. **the sacred bush.** The mistletoe. The hanging of the mistletoe is one of those relics of ancient religious customs which have become associated with Christian festivals, the plant having been regarded with the utmost reverence by the Druids.

5. **wassail-bowl.** "Wassail" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon exclamation meaning 'good health,' used in drinking. The term then came to be applied to a festive occasion, or to the liquor drunk, especially to the spiced ale associated with New Year and Christmas festivities.

15. **the church commissioners.** Persons appointed by the government to determine matters in connection with the churches would be likely to come into collision with the views of the conservative parson.

16. **hawking at.** Attacking ; the connection of this metaphorical sense with the old sport of hawking is sufficiently evident. Geology with its revolutionary views as to the history of the globe could not commend itself to the parson.

36. **Mastodon.** A gigantic animal, now extinct, akin to the elephant.

50-51. Compare the description of Tennyson's own reading on p. 78, *ante*.

---

### MORTE D'ARTHUR.

This poem was first published in the volumes of 1842; Edward Fitzgerald states that it was read to him from MS. in 1835, and then lacked introduction and epilogue. Again he says, "Mouthing out his hollow oes and aes, deep-chested music, this is something as A. T. reads . . . His voice very deep and deep-chested, but rather murmuring than mouthing, like the sound of a far sea or of a pine-wood, I remember, greatly struck Carlyle." Tennyson, according to his son (Life, I., p. 194), warned his readers "not to press too hardly on details whether for history or for allegory."

In 1869, when the greater number of *The Idylls of the King* had been written, Tennyson took this poem out of its setting, prefixed 169 lines, and added 30 at the close, in order to fit it to be the conclusion of the series of *Idylls of the King*; in this shape it is entitled *The Passing of Arthur*. The added lines serve to make the connection with the other idylls closer, and to bring out the symbolic meaning, which in the earlier form had not, in the body of the poem, been very prominent; indeed, *Morte d'Arthur* may, according to the feelings of some readers at least, be best enjoyed without thought of symbolism. The style of the *Morte d'Arthur* is unlike, and (in the present editor's opinion) superior, to that of the other idylls—the blank verse more stately, and less familiar in its rhythms, the style more terse and restrained. Apart from particular imitations of phrase and turns of

expression, the Homeric quality lies in the dignified flow of the verse, in the terseness and clearness yet impressiveness of the style, and, to some degree, in the nature of the theme; but Mr. Brimley is undoubtedly right when he says: "They are rather Virgilian than Homeric echoes; elaborate and stately, not naive and eager to tell the story; rich in pictorial detail; carefully studied; conscious of their own art; more anxious for beauty of workmanship than interest of action" (Brimley's *Essays*, p. 34). In this poem and in *Ulysses*, Tennyson's blank verse is at its best. Tennyson is one of the most successful employers of narrative blank verse. The great model in this species had been Milton; but his long and resonant periods, his rhythm attained largely by the use of sonorous polysyllables, were little suited to the treatment of themes less grand than his own. Accordingly, the poets of the 18th century who used blank verse in narrative, were constantly falling into pompous rhetoric, or into homely and unrhythymical lines differing little from prose. Tennyson, making use of some models he found in Keats, developed a blank verse of his own, in which by a careful adjustment of the pauses within the lines, an avoidance of *diæresis* (i.e., the coincidence of word endings, with foot-endings), etc., he attained smoothly-flowing verses without the use of polysyllables, and a periodic rhythm less prolonged and involved than Milton's.

The source of *Morte d'Arthur* is Sir Thomas Malory's version of the Arthurian legends—a book entitled *Morte d'Arthur*, written about 1570. The original is followed with remarkable closeness in parts, and the comparison is so interesting that we quote the whole (viz., chap. v. of Bk. xxi.):—

Ah, Sir Launcelot, said king Arthur, this day have I sore missed thee. Alas, that ever I was against thee, for now have I my death, whereof sir Gawayne me warned in my dream. Then Sir Loran took up the king the one part, and Sir Bedivere the other part, and in the lifting, the king swooned, and Sir Loran fell in a swoon with the life, that the part of his bowels fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's head, brest. And when king Arthur came to himself again, he beheld Sir Loran how he lay, foaming at the mouth, and part of his bowels lay at his feet. Alas, said the king, this is unto me a full heavy sight to see this noble stroke so die for my sake, for he would have helped me that had more need of help than I. Alas, he wold not complain (as his heart wold be set to help me). Now Jesu have mercy upon his soul. Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. Leave that mourning and weeping, said the king, for all this will not avail me: for, wit thou well, and I might live myself, the death of Sir Loran wold grieve me evermore; but my time bieth fast, said the king. Therefore, said Arthur, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water-side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again. So Sir Bedivere

departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and haft were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And as soon as he might he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water. What sawest thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is untruly said of thee, said the king; therefore go thou lightly again, and do my command as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword; and so eft he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan. Ah traitor, untrue, said king Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have wend that thou that hast been to me so lief and dear, and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the riches of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands, for thou wouldest for my rich sword see me dead. Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might, and there came an arm and an hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long. Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge, with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw king Arthur. Now put me into the barge, said the king: and so he did softly. And there received him three queens with great mourning, and so they set him down, and in one of their laps king Arthur laid his head, and then that queen said, Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold. And so then they rowed from the land; and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies. Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I will into the vale of Avilion, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queens and the ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest, and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar of a chapel and an hermitage.

1. So refers to a supposed preceding portion, *Morte d'Arthur* being, as indicated in *The Epic*, a mere fragment.

2. King Arthur's table. The famous "Round Table" with its 150 seats. After it was named the order of knights established by Arthur,

A glorious company, the flower of men,  
To serve as model for the mighty world,  
And be the fair beginning of a time.

—Guinevere.

4. **Lyonnesse.** A fabulous country, extending from Cornwall to the Sicily Isles, and supposed to have been subsequently submerged by the sea.

6. **bold Sir Bedivere.** "Bold" is a permanent epithet that is connected with Sir Bedivere when there is no reason in the context for calling attention to that particular quality. Such permanent epithets are especially common in Homer, so Achilles is *ποδαρεὺς* (swift footed), Ulysses *πολιαρεὺς* (crafty), etc. In Virgil *pius* is a frequent epithet of Aeneas; in Scott, William of Deloraine is "good at need."

7. This line is omitted in *The Passing of Arthur*, the only change the poet made in the original poem when he developed *Morte d'Arthur* into *The Passing of Arthur*.

9. **chancel.** Properly, the eastern portion of the church containing the choir and altar, often railed off from the main part of the edifice.

12. **a great water.** "This phrase has probably often been ridiculed as affected phraseology for 'a great lake'; but it is an instance of the intense presentative power of Mr. Tennyson's genius. It precisely marks the appearance of a large lake outspread and taken in at one glance from a high ground. Had 'a great lake' been substituted for it, the phrase would have needed to be translated by the mind into water of a certain shape and size, before the picture was realized by the imagination. 'A great lake' is, in fact, one degree removed from the sensuous to the logical, -from the individual appearance to the generic name, and is, therefore, less poetic and pictorial" (Brimley). The word "water" is used in the same sense by Malory (see iv., 6).

21. **Camelot.** See note on *Lady of Shalott*, I. 5.

23. **Merlin.** The famous enchanter; he received Arthur at his birth, and reappears repeatedly in the legends; he is one of the chief characters in the Idyll *Merlin and Vivien*.

23-24. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, where this prophecy in regard to Arthur is referred to—

And Merlin in our time  
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn,  
Though men may wound him, that he will not die,  
But pass, and come again.

27. **Excalibur.** The word is said to be of Celtic origin and to mean 'cut-steel'; Spenser calls Arthur's sword *Morddure*, i.e., 'the hard-biter.' In the stories of chivalry, the sword, spear, etc., of the heroes,

which often possessed magical powers, have commonly special names. In the following stanza from Longfellow, the names of the swords of Charlemagne, The Cid, Orlando, Arthur, and Lancelot are successively mentioned :

It is the sword of a good Knight,  
Tho' homespun be his mail;  
What matter if it be not bright  
*Joyeuse, Colada, Durindale,*  
*Excalibur, or Aroundight.*

In *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 295, Excalibur is described :

the sword

That rose from out the bosom of the lake,  
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich  
With jewels—elfin Urim, on the hilt,  
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright  
That men are blinded by it—on one side,  
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,  
“Take me,” but turn the blade and ye shall see,  
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,  
“Cast me away !”

31. **samite** is a rich silk stuff interwoven with threads of gold and silver.

37. **middle mere.** ‘Middle of the mere.’ Tennyson is imitating a common Latin construction ; cf. note on *Oenone*, 10.

38. **lightly.** ‘Nimbly,’ ‘quickly’ ; the word is used frequently by Malory. See pp. 187-8 above.

43. **hest.** ‘Command’ ; frequent in Shakespeare, etc.

48-51. Note the variations of consonants, vowels, and pauses in this line to give sound effects in keeping with the sense.

51. **levels.** “The classic *aequora* may have suggested the ‘shining levels,’ but there is a deeper reason for the change of phrase, for the great water as seen from the high ground, becomes a series of flashing surfaces when Sir Bedivere looks along it from its margin” (Brimley). Cf. Virgil, *Georgics I.*, 469 : *tellus quoque et aequora*.

55. **keen with frost.** We connect frost with transparency of the air, and the transparency of the air made the moonlight clearer.

56. **diamond sparks.** “The eds. down to 1853 have ‘diamond studs’” (Rolfe).

57. **Jacinth.** Another form of hyacinth; the name is applied to a bright coloured, transparent variety of zircon of various shades of red passing into orange.

60. Now looking at one side of the question, now at another. The line is a translation of *Aeneid*, iv., 285: *Atque animum nunc hue celerem, nunc dividit illuc.*

61. **In act to throw.** Cf. *The Princess*, ii., 429: "A tiger-cat In act to spring." "An expression much used by Pope in his translation of the *Iliad*. Cf. *Il.* iii., 349, *ἀπειπε παῖσσο*, which Pope renders—

Atreides then his massy lance prepares,  
In act to throw."

(Rowe and Webb).

63. **the many-knotted waterflags.** This refers presumably to the iris which, with its blue and yellow flowers and sword shaped leaves, is so common near streams, pools, etc. What the poet refers to by "many-knotted" is not clear. Mr. Sykes enumerates the explanations in his note: "(1) The root stalk of the flag which shows additional bulbs from year to year; (2) the joints in the flower stalks, of which some half-dozen may be found in each stalk; (3) the large seed-pods that terminate the stalks, a very noticeable feature when the plant is sere; (4) the various bunches or knots of iris in a bed of the plants, so that the whole phrase suggests a thickly matted bed of flags. I favour the last interpretation, though Tennyson's fondness of technical accuracy in his references makes the second more than possible."

70-71. "The ripple *washing in the reeds*," and the "wild water *lapping on the crags*" are "two phrases marking exactly the difference of sound produced by water swelling up against a permeable or impermeable barrier" (Brimley).

73. 'Thou hast been false to thy natural honesty, and to thy title of knight.' Cf. Malory: "And thou art named a noble knight and would betray me for the riches of the sword."

80. **lief.** 'Dear' (A. S. *leof*), used by Chaucer (e.g., *Traylus and Criseyde*, iii., l. 596: "myn uncle lief and dere"), Spenser, etc., but now obsolete except in the colloquial phrase, "I had as lief."

86. **chased.** 'Engraved with ornamental designs.'

103-106. Malory, i., 22, tells how Arthur first saw the Lady of the Lake: "So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair

water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder, is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake: What damsel is that, said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any upon earth and richly beseen."

110. **conceit.** Used, as often in Shakespeare, in the original sense of 'conception,' 'idea'; cf. *Merch. of Venice*, iii., 4, 2: "You have a noble and a true conceit of godlike amity."

112. The repetition of lines and phrases is Homeric.

122. Tennyson is fond of this bold metaphor; cf. *In Memoriam*, ix.: "Till all my widow'd race be run," *Aylmer's Field*, 720: "I cry to vacant chairs and widow'd walls."

125. 'Who shouldst perform all the services which belonged to them severally.'

129. **for.** 'Since': a use of *for* common in Shakespeare, e.g., *Richard III*, ii., 2, 85 (see Abbot's *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 151).

139. **a streamer of the northern morn.** A ray of the Aurora Borealis (Aurora=dawn, Borealis=northern). Cf. Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, iv., 9:

Shifting like flashes darted forth  
By the red streamers of the north.

140. **the moving isles**, etc. Icebergs; the aurora is more conspicuous in northern latitudes.

171. **Remorsefully.** 'With pity.' *Remorse* is employed by Shakespeare in sense of 'pity'; so *Merch. of Ven.*, iv., 1, 20:

Thou'l show thy mercy and remorse more strange  
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty.

and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, iv., 3, 13:

O Eglamour thou art a gentleman  
Valiant, wise, remorseful, well accomplish'd.

182. His breath, made visible by the frosty air, clung about him.

183. The effect that mist has in enlarging the apparent size of objects is a matter of common experience, cf. *Guinevere*, 597:

The moony vapour rolling round the King,  
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,  
Enwound him fold by fold.

186. **Dry** clash'd. We speak of *liquid* sounds; *dry* as applied to sounds means harsh and abrupt. The metaphor is suggested by classical phrases; so in *Hud*, xiii., 409: *καρπούσιον ιατρίς άνε* ('the shield rang dry' when struck by a spear); *Luretius*, vi., 119, uses *aridus sonus* (dry sound) in reference to certain kinds of thunder; again Virgil *Georg.* I., 357-8; *aridus fragor*. Cf. *The Voyage*, l. 10:

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,  
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail.

**harness.** 'Body-armour'—the original meaning of the word. Cf. *Mucheth*, v., 5, 52: "At least we'll die with harness on our back."

186-90. Similar sound-effects in frosty air are noted by Wordsworth, *Influence of Natural Objects* :—

With the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud,  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron.

192. 'The reflections of the moon on the water.'

193. **hove.** For 'hove in sight'; from *heave* 'to rise,' as in Gray's *Elegy*: "Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap"; the phrase is applied to a vessel *rising* above the horizon.

197. **Black-stoled.** *Stole* is a long loose robe reaching to the feet; cf. *Sir Galahad*, 43.

199. **shiver'd.** Cf. *The Princess*, iii., 73: "Consonant chords that shiver to one note." In the present passage the word seems to convey not only the idea of vibration, but also of shrillness.

**tingling.** As if the stars had nerves which thrilled in response.

202-3. The details are very effective in suggesting a picture of utter desolation.

209. **casque.** 'Helmet.'

214. **the springing east.** 'The rising sun.' Cf. p. 142, 2nd sentence.

215. **greaves.** See note on *Lady of Shalott*, l. 76.

**cusses.** Armour for the thighs; cf. *I. Hen. IV.*, iv., 1, 105: "His cusses on his thighs."

235. Cf. Malory, xiv., 2: "Also Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right."

240-1. These two lines give expression to the inner sense of the poem. Cf. *In Memoriam*, Prologue :

Our little systems have their day ;  
They have their day and cease to be :  
They are but broken lights of thee  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

242. In order that men may develop, and not stagnate, there is need of change. Even good customs are apt to degenerate into mere formalities, and to hamper the growth of the human spirit.

244-5. "May God accept my work and, absorbing it, as it were, into Himself, purify it of all its unworthy elements" (Rowe and Webb).

254. The idea of the earth being bound to the heavens by a gold chain is an old one, and has been supposed to originate with Homer (*Iliad*, viii., 25-26). It is found in *Par. Lost*, ii., 1051, in Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, there is an allusion to it : "According to the allegory of the poets the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair," and in Hare's Sermon on the Law of Self-Sacrifice : "This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator."

259. Malory speaks in one passage of a valley and in others of an island of Avilion—mere places of earth, however ; but in Celtic legend the name is connected with the habitation of the blest, and it is in that sense that the poet uses it here.

260. Cf. the description of Elysium, *Odyssey*, vi., 42 :

ὅθι φησὶ θεῶν ἴδος ἀσφαλὲς ἀτεί<sup>τ</sup>  
ἔμμεναι οὐτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρῳ  
δενεται οὔτε χιῶν ἐπιπλιναται

(Where, they say, the seat of the Gods abideth sure, nor is it shaken by winds or ever wetted by shower, nor does snow come near it.)

and *Lucretius*, iii., 18-22 :—

apparet divum numen sedesque quietae  
quas neque concutunt venti nec nubila nimbis  
aspergunt neque nix acri concreta pruina  
cana cadens violat semperque innubilus aether  
integit.

(The divinity of the gods is revealed and their tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains nor snow congealed by sharp frost harms with hoary fall : an ever-cloudless aether o'ercanopies them.)

and Tennyson himself in *Lorelei*:

The Gods, who haunt  
The lucid interspaces of world and world,  
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,  
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow.

218. High from the dais-throne. 'As he sat elevated on the dais-throne.'

223. In the later *Idylls of the King*, the poet's conception of Arthur changes somewhat; and he represents his hero as indifferent about his success in tournaments; he is inferior in this respect to Lancelot (see *Gareth and Lynette*, 485-6), but excels in real battle; cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 310, fol.

232. Cf. *Matthew* ii., 1-11: "Now when Jesus was born . . . behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him . . . And, lo, the star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was . . . And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

234. Round Table. See note on 1. 3.

262. Deep-meadow'd. A translation of *βαθύτειος* (*Iliad*, ix., 151).

happy. The commentators compare Virgil's "laetas segetes" (glad harvest).

263. crown'd with summer sea. Cf. *Odyssey*, x., 195; *νησον την πατρος απειλητος ιστιονοντο* (an island round which the infinite sea has made a crown).

267. fluting. 'Singing with flute-like notes.' The notion of the swan singing before death is very ancient: it is found in Virgil, Pliny, etc.; cf. *Othello*, v., 2: "I will play the swan and die in music," Tennyson's *Dying Swan*, etc.

268. Ruffles. Refers to the slight opening out of the wings when the swan swims.

269. swarthy webs. 'The dark webbed feet.'

## ST. AGNES' EVE.

Published originally in *The Keepsake* for 1837, under the title of *St. Agnes*; included in the *Poems* of 1842; the title changed to *St. Agnes' Eve* in the edition of 1855.

January 21st is sacred to St. Agnes, who, it is narrated, refused to marry the heathen son of the pretor, and after terrible persecution suffered martyrdom in the reign of the emperor Diocletian (284-305, A.D.). With St. Agnes' Eve various superstitions were connected, more especially that upon observing the proper rites, a maiden might see her future husband (cf. Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*). It is possible that Tennyson felt that the character and circumstances delineated in the poem did not exactly suit St. Agnes, and, accordingly changed the title of the poem, leaving the heroine a nameless embodiment of that ascetic enthusiasm which finds its masculine representative in Sir Galahad; she is "the pure and beautiful enthusiast who has died away from all her human emotions, and become the bride for whom a Heavenly Bridegroom is waiting.... Wordsworth at his best, as in 'Lucy,' might scarcely match the music of these stanzas; their pictorial perfection he could hardly attain unto; every image is in such delicate harmony with the pure young worshipper that it seems to have been transfigured by her purity, and in the last four lines the very sentences faint with the breathless culmination of her rapture" (Luce).

16. **argent round.** 'The full moon.'

19. **mine earthly house.** Cf. *II Corinthians* v., 1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

21. **Break up.** 'Break open,' as in *I Henry VI.*, 1, 3, and *Matthew* xxiv., 43: "If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he....would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

25-36. She too has her marvellous vision, like other maidens on St. Agnes' Eve, but a vision of an import and character very different from theirs.

35. **the shining sea.** Cf. *Revelation* xv., 2: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast....stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

## "BREAK, BREAK, BREAK."

This poem appeared for the first time in the collection of 1842, and is one of the most beautiful of Tennyson's lyrics. See the remark on p. 90, *ante*, and the note on the same page.

It will be noted that while there are only three syllables in the first line the normal line of the poem contains three feet, and the predominant foot is trisyllabic; so that each of these syllables corresponds to a foot, and this line might have consisted of nine syllables. Hence the effective slow music of the opening; the time which would have been occupied by the lacking syllables of the verse being filled up by the slow enunciation of the long vowel sound in 'break,' and by the pauses between the words.

## THE VOYAGE.

This poem was first published in the volume entitled *Enoch Arden and Other Poems*, 1864. The spirit of it finds frequent expression in Tennyson's verse; compare *Ulysses* with its yearning for the never resting pursuit of experience and knowledge "beyond the utmost bound of human thought"; or the passage in *Locksley Hall*, "Not in vain the distance beacons, forward, forward let us range"; or in *Freedom*, "O follower of the Vision, still in motion to the distant gleam"; the completest parallel is afforded by *Merlin and the Gloom*. The poem is symbolic, and shadows forth, in a description of a voyage by sea, the unwearied pursuit of some unattainable ideal, a pursuit which gives play to energy and zest to life, and is maintained with cheerful confidence into the very gates of death. Further, apart from its allegorical significance, the poem admirably expresses the joy and fascination of the sailor's life and the freshness and exhilaration of the open sea. Speaking of the attraction of the sea which has exercised so potent an influence on the English race, Stopford Brooke says, "It lives in *The Voyage*, that delightful poem, with its double meaning, half of life on the sea and half of the life of the soul."

11. **The Lady's-head** carved upon the prow,—a common ornament on ships.

12. **shrill salt.** "Shrill" commonly applies to sound, but occasionally, as here, is applied to other sensations, —'keen,' 'piercing,' 'sharp.' In an old poem (*Alliterative Poems*, Ed., Morris) we find "schrylle schynde," shined brightly (quoted *Century Dictionary*).

**sheer'd.** Cut; the word is a variant of 'shear.'

27. **rim.** The horizon.

41. **peaks that flamed.** Volcanoes; hence the 'ashy rains' below.

44. The cloud of ashes rising, at first, directly upwards and then spreading out, resembles a plume or pine.

52. **wakes of fire.** The phosphorescence common at sea, caused by minute organisms in the water.

71. **the bloodless point reversed.** The liberty which is to be attained without bloodshed.

73. One who has never had much faith in the ideal, and at length wholly loses it.

84. The difficulties which the actual constitution of the universe put in their way, they, in their enthusiasm, regarded with contempt.

89. The brilliant days of youth and fully developed manhood are over, old age is the 'colder clime.'

---

### IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ.

First published in the *Enoch Arden* volume of 1864. Cauteretz is a beautiful valley of the French Pyrenees. In the summer of 1830, Tennyson and his friend Hallam went to Spain carrying money from English sympathizers to the Spanish insurgents who were under the leadership of Torrijos. Among other places, they visited this valley, and the scenery inspired Tennyson to write the opening passage of *Oenone*. Tennyson did not see the place again for thirty-one years. "On August 6th [1861], my father's birthday, we arrived at Cauteretz, his favourite valley in the Pyrenees. Before our windows we had the torrent rushing over its rocky bed from far away among the mountains and falling in cataracts. Patches of snow lay upon the peaks above, and nearer were great wooded heights glorious with autumn colours, bare rocks here and there, and greenest mountain meadows below. He wrote his lyric 'All along the Valley' after hearing the voice of the torrent seemingly sound deeper as the 'night grew' (in memory of his visit here with Arthur Hallam)." "My father was vexed that he had written 'two and thirty years ago' in his 'All along the Valley' instead of 'one and thirty years ago,' and as late as 1892 wished to alter it since he hated inaccuracy. I persuaded him to let his first reading stand, for the public had learned to love his poem in its present form, and besides 'two and thirty' was more melodious." (*Life*, I., p. 475).





*Browning.*

To face p. 133.

## NOTES ON BROWNING.

THE Browning family seems to have been a sound, vigorous and genuinely English stock, which, at length, after various remote strains had been grafted upon it, produced the flower of genius in the person of Robert Browning, the poet. His grandfather, who migrated from Dorsetshire to London, was a successful official in the Bank of England, and married a certain Margaret Tittle, a native of St. Kitts in the West Indies. Their son, the poet's father, disappointed in his desire of becoming an artist, also entered the service of the bank in which he continued until advancing years brought superannuation. As a bank clerk he earned a steady income which, if not large, sufficed his needs. In 1811, he married Sarah Ann Weidemann, of Scottish German origin, her father, a native of Hamburg, having settled and married in Dundee; he was a ship-owner in a small way. Browning's parents spent their joint lives in the southern suburbs of London; and there, in Camberwell, their eldest son Robert was born, May 7th, 1812. Only one other child, a daughter, survived infancy; she never married and long after, in her brother's latest years, presided over his household. Browning was specially fortunate in his family relations; in the absence of a public school and university education this quiet, simple, nonconformist family circle counted for more in his case than is perhaps usual with English men of letters. It was not, however, an ordinary middle-class home; the father was a man of exceptional culture with pronounced artistic and literary tastes, something of a scholar and an enthusiastic collector of books and prints. We hear of the charm he exercised over those he met, through his simple, cheerful, unworldly spirit, and his kindly heart. "The father and uncle," writes Dante Rossetti to William Allingham, "father especially, show just that submissive yet highly cheerful and capable simplicity of character which often, I think, appears in the family of a great man who uses at last what others have kept for him. The father is a complete oddity— with real genius for drawing . . . . and as innocent as a child." To his son he transmitted a vigorous constitution and an energetic and optimistic temperament. The mother was characterized by Carlyle as "the true type of a Scottish gentlewoman;" she was a pious woman with a delicate and nervous organization and was a loving and judicious mother to her distinguished

son. The boy "was a handsome, vigorous, fearless child, and soon developed an unresting activity and a fiery temper. He clamoured for occupation from the moment he could speak." His education was of a somewhat unusual and desultory character; school counted for little, and he did not take a university course. But the house overflowed with books from which he did not fail to profit. "By the indulgence of my father and mother," he wrote in a letter of 1887, "I was allowed to live my own life and choose my own course in it; which, having been the same from the beginning to the end, necessitated a permission to read nearly all sorts of books in a well-stocked and very miscellaneous library. I had no other direction than my parents' taste for whatever was highest and best in literature; but I found out for myself many forgotten fields which proved the richest of pastures." As he grew older he had tutors in various branches, and thus was instructed not only in academic subjects but also in music, singing, dancing, riding and fencing. He had a passion for music and early showed artistic aptitudes. By the time he was twelve years old he had written a volume of poems which seemed to his father to possess real excellence, but which the writer himself, in later life, described as mere echoes of Byron. In 1825 he accidentally became acquainted with the poems of Shelley and Keats, and was profoundly affected by the work of the former. Shelley's influence is the most important single literary factor in his life, and traces of it are clearly perceptible in his first published poem *Pauline*; but Browning's genius was markedly individual and independent, and less in his case than is usual, can one perceive indebtedness either to predecessors or contemporaries.

Browning early determined to be a poet; when the time came to make choice of a profession, "he appealed to his father whether it would not be better for him to see life in the best sense and cultivate the powers of his mind than shackle himself in the very outset of his career by a laborious training foreign to his aim." The father acquiesced and cheerfully furnished from his modest income the means which freed his son from the necessity of pursuing any lucrative calling. "He secured for me," says the latter, "all the ease and comfort that a literary man needs to do good work." By the kindness of an aunt, his mother's sister, a poem of his, *Pauline*, was printed in 1833. This youthful production, apart from impressing favourably two or three discerning critics, wholly failed to attract public attention. In 1833-4 he spent some three months in St. Petersburg.

In 1835 he published *Paracelsus*, a work which holds its own, even when brought into comparison with his maturer productions : although it wholly failed in winning popular favour, *Paracelsus* revealed to the few the advent of a poet of extraordinary promise, and opened for him the doors of literary society in London. He made the acquaintance of many distinguished men, and came into close and friendly relations, especially, with the critic, John Foster, and with the great actor, Macready. Partly through the influence of the latter, he began the writing of plays, and to this species of literature he devoted a considerable part of his poetic activity during the next ten years. Two of these, *Stratford* and *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, were produced on the stage with partial success ; but the treatment the latter play received at the hands of the manager made the author resolve to write no more for the theatre. In 1838 he made his first visit to Italy, a country with which much of his work and much of his life were to be closely connected. He was already engaged upon a poem based on mediaeval Italian history, *Sordello*. It is the most difficult of all his works, and made Browning's name a by-word for obscurity : the impression thus created was doubtless one of the factors in his failure, during the next twenty years, to make any progress in popular regard. As his writings brought no money return, he had recourse to a cheap method of publication : he issued them from time to time, as they accumulated on his hands, in paper-covered pamphlets, each consisting of sixteen double-columned pages. From 1841 to 1846, eight of these pamphlets appeared ; in them was to be found some of his best and most characteristic work, notably *Pippa Passes* (1844) and the two collections of shorter poems entitled *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). The series had the common title, *Bells and Pomegranates*, "to indicate," as the poet explained, "an endeavour towards something like an alternation or mixture of music with discourse, sound with sense, poetry with thought."

A second voyage to Italy was made in 1844. On his return opened the one romantic incident of his uneventful history. Miss Elizabeth Barrett, who already enjoyed a wide reputation as a poet, had recently published a volume which contained a complimentary allusion to Browning's poetry. Browning read the volume with enthusiastic admiration, and, at the instigation of a common friend, John Kenyon, expressed this admiration in a letter to Miss Barrett. The result was an animated correspondence and a growing feeling of warm friendship. Miss Barrett was a chronic invalid, confined to her room, scarcely

seeing anyone but the members of her own family ; hence for some months the poets did not actually meet. At length, on May 20th, 1845, Browning saw his correspondent for the first time, "a little figure which did not rise from the sofa, pale ringleted face, great eager, wistfully pathetic eyes." The friendship rapidly ripened into passionate admiration. But to the natural issue of their attachment were great obstacles. Her father was a man of strange and selfish temper, who thought that the lives of his children should be wholly dedicated to himself, and who treated his daughter--now thirty-nine years of age as if she were a child. To him she could not dare even to hint the possibility of marriage. More insuperable obstacle still was her own ill-health ; though under the stimulus of the new interest in life, this had greatly improved, she was supposed to be labouring under an incurable disease of the spine. To incur her father's anger, to burden her lover with an invalid wife seemed to her impossible. A twelvemonth passed ; in the summer of 1846, her life was represented as depending upon her spending the following winter in a warmer climate. Her father negatived any such plan. There was now a new and forcible argument in Browning's favour, and Miss Barrett at length yielded. They were married in September, 1846, and embarked for the continent. The father never forgave his daughter and henceforward persistently refused all communications with her or her husband.

This marriage, which was at once one of the most extraordinary and one of the happiest in the annals of genius, completely changed the tenor of Browning's life. During the next fifteen years his home was in Italy, and for the greater part of that time, in Florence ; although, in summer especially, other parts of Italy afforded a temporary residence. Mrs. Browning's health greatly improved, and, while still frail, she could travel, enjoy the open air, and mingle, to some limited degree, with the world. In the earlier years of their married life, they saw but little of society ; but subsequently they became acquainted with many English and Americans resident or travelling in Italy, and formed not a few intimate friendships, for example, with Landor, Lytton, Leighton (the painter), Fanny Kemble, among the English ; and with Powers (the sculptor), Margaret Fuller Ossoli, Hawthorne, and the Storys, among Americans. In 1849 a son was born to them. In the spring of 1851, Mrs. Browning's health permitted a journey northward, and the following year-and-a-half was spent in London and Paris. They now came into close personal relations with many of their distinguished contemporaries, Carlyle, Tennyson, D. G. Rossetti, and

others. The visit was repeated in 1855, when *Men and Women* was published; this volume contains probably a larger quantity of Browning's best work than any other single publication of his. In 1851 Browning had been appreciatively reviewed by a French critic, M. Milsand, in the pages of a leading French magazine. But the indifference of the English reading public continued, now and for years to come. To this Mrs. Browning refers, some ten years later, in a letter to her husband's sister: "His treatment in England affects him, naturally, and for my part I set it down as an infamy of that public—no other word." After referring to the recognition he was finding in the United States, she continues "I don't complain for myself of an unappreciating public. *I have no reason.* But just for *that* reason, I complain more about Robert—only he does not hear me complain—to *you* I may say that the blindness, deafness, and stupidity of the English public to Robert are amazing. Of course, Milsand has heard his name—well, the contrary would have been strange. Robert is. All England can't prevent his existence, I suppose. But nobody there, except a small knot of pre-Raphaelite men, pretend to do him justice. Mr. Forster has done the best—in the press. As a sort of lion, Robert has his range in society—and for the rest you should see Chapman's [his publisher] returns! While in America he is a power, a writer, a poet—he is read—he lives in the hearts of the people!"

One consequence of this state of things had been that the Brownings had been under the necessity of living with the strictest economy. In 1855 their finances were placed in a better condition by legacies amounting to £11,000 which came to them through the death of their old friend John Kenyon. The plan of dividing the time between London, Paris and Italy was continued until 1861. By that time Mrs. Browning's health had begun to decline; a winter spent in Rome proved unfavourable to her, and on June 29th, she suddenly expired in her husband's arms at their own home in Florence.

The blow to Browning was overwhelming. "Life must now begin anew," he wrote, "all the old cast off and the new one put on. I shall go away, break up everything, go to England, and live and work and write." As soon as possible he left Florence, never to revisit it, and, mainly from considerations in regard to his son, took up his residence in London. His manner of life again underwent a revolution. He at first lived a very isolated existence, cutting himself off wholly from general society. But, in the spring of 1862, as he told Mr. Gosse, he suddenly realized that "this mode of life was morbid and unworthy,

and, then and there, he determined to accept for the future every suitable invitation that came to him." Thus, in course of time, he came to be one of the most familiar figures in London society, and at notable public entertainments, especially of a musical character. His summers he was accustomed to spend on the coast of France. In 1864 he published *Dramatis Personae*, a collection of poems similar in character and excellence to *Men and Women*. The tide of opinion had now begun to set decisively in his favour. In 1864 he writes to an intimate friend: "There were always a few people who had a certain opinion of my poems, but nobody cared to speak what he thought, or the things printed twenty-five years ago would not have waited so long for a good word; but at last a new set of men arrive who don't mind the conventionalities of ignoring one and seeing everything in another—Chapman [his publisher] says 'the new orders come from Oxford and Cambridge,' and all my new cultivators are young men.... As I begin, so I shall end,—taking my own course, pleasing myself or aiming at doing so, and thereby, I hope, pleasing God. As I never did otherwise, I never had any fear as to what I did going ultimately to the bad,—hence in collected editions, I always reprinted everything, smallest and greatest." His fame was fully established on the publication of the longest and one of the greatest of his poems *The Ring and the Book* in 1868-9. From this time, even the general public, although they did not read him, became aware of the fact that Tennyson was not the only great English poet living and writing. When *The Ring and the Book* was approaching completion, Browning wrote: "Booksellers are making me pretty offers for it. One sent to propose, last week, to publish it at his risk, giving me *all* the profits, and pay me the whole in advance—'for the incidental advantages of my name'—the R. B. who for six months once did not sell one copy of the poems."

In 1881 a novel honour was done him in the foundation in London of a society for the study and elucidation of his works. This example was followed far and wide both in Great Britain and in America; and the Browning cult became a temporary fashion. However feeble or foolish some of this work may have been, these Browning societies, on the whole, did much for the spreading of a genuine interest in the works of a somewhat recondite poet. Browning himself continued to be a diligent writer to the last, but none of the numerous volumes issued subsequent to 1868 reached the level which had been attained by the best of his earlier work. In his work, activity of the intellect had always tended to trespass unduly upon the sphere of the imagination,

and with the decay of imaginative power natural to old age, the purely poetic excellence of his writings began to decline, although they might still continue to possess interest as the utterances of a powerful and active mind. In 1878 Italy was revisited for the first time since his wife's death, and began to exercise its former fascination over him. He returned repeatedly and finally purchased the Palazzo Rezzonico in Venice as a residence for his son, who had become an artist. Gradually old age began to tell on the vigorous frame of the poet, but, as far as health permitted, he maintained his old interests and activities to the last, and his final volume of poems appeared on the very day of his death. This occurred in Venice on Dec. 12th, 1889.

Mr. Edmond Gosse, who knew Browning in his later years, thus sums up his personal characteristics: "In physique Robert Browning was short and thick set, of very muscular build; his temper was ardent and optimistic; he was appreciative, sympathetic and full of curiosity; prudent in affairs and rather 'close' about money; robust, active, loud of speech, cordial in manner, gracious and conciliatory in address; but subject to sudden fits of indignation which were like thunderstorms." Hawthorne speaking of an evening spent with the Brownings in Florence, 1858, says: "Mr. Browning was very efficient in keeping up conversation with everybody, and seemed to be in all parts of the room and in every group at the same moment; a most vivid and quick-thoughted person, logical and common-sensible, as, I presume, poets generally are in their daily talk." On another occasion he says: "Browning was very genial and full of life as usual, but his conversation has the effervescent aroma which you cannot catch, even if you get the very words that seem imbued with it. . . . . Browning's nonsense is of very genuine and excellent quality, the true babble and effervescence of a bright and powerful mind, and he lets it play among his friends with the faith and simplicity of a child. He must be an amiable man."

In his later years, when Browning mingled freely in society, he did not, to the casual observer, seem the poet, either in his general appearance or in his talk. He gave the impression of being a shrewd and energetic man of the world. Mr. F. G. Palgrave, whom he used frequently to visit subsequent to 1861, describes his visits as very pleasant, "but neither then nor afterwards was his conversation in any apparent near relation to his work or thought as a poet." In regard to this trait Sir Leslie Stephen writes in an essay, *The Browning Letters*, "People who met Browning occasionally accepted the common-place

doctrine that the poet and the man may be wholly different persons. Browning, that is, could talk like a brilliant man of the world, and the common-place person could infer that he did not possess the feelings which he did not care to exhibit at a dinner party. It was not difficult to discover that such a remark showed the superficiality of the observer, not the absence of the underlying qualities. These letters, at any rate, demonstrate to the dullest that the intensity of passion which makes the poet, was equally present in the man." To this passage he subjoins a note: "I happened to meet Browning at a moment of great interest to me, I knew little of him then, and had rather taken him at the valuation indicated above. He spoke a few words, showing such tenderness, insight, and sympathy, that I have never forgotten his kindness; and from that time knew him for what he was. I cannot say more; but I say so much by way of expressing my gratitude." Very weighty testimony to the charm and greatness of Browning's character is found in a private letter of Jowett's, the late Master of Balliol, dated 1868. "I thought I was getting too old to make new friends. But I believe I have made one—Mr. Browning the poet, who has been staying with me during the last few days. It is impossible to speak without enthusiasm of his open, generous nature and his great ability and knowledge. I had no idea that there was a perfectly sensible poet in the world, entirely free from vanity, jealousy, or any other littleness, and thinking no more of himself than if he were an ordinary man. His great energy is very remarkable, and his determination to make the most of the remainder of his life."

---

*General Characteristics.*

**Browning's exceptional position.**—Browning holds a somewhat isolated position in the development of poetry; he was a man of marked originality and independence, and thought and wrote as seemed good to him, with less regard than usual for the traditions of his art. The dominant tendencies in English poetry in his day were favourable to ideals and methods very unlike his own; and as the taste of most readers has been formed upon these models, and especially upon the very different style of Tennyson, there is likely to be some difficulty in appreciating the qualities of his work. Further, his poems are very varied in character, cover a wide range of subjects, many of them taken from unfamiliar spheres, present thoughts and a point of view novel

and sometimes foreign to ordinary ways of thinking, and contain an unusual number of idiosyncrasies in form and expression. To give any adequate characterization of work, so broad, so varied, and so individual, would require greater space than is here at command, and, in view of the very small number of poems prescribed, would be out of place. It seems advisable, therefore, to consider chiefly those aspects of his poetry which are exemplified in the selections before us or which may be immediately helpful towards the appreciation and understanding of them.

**His temperament.** —The literary and artistic temperament is prone to have a morbid side; but Browning was endowed with an organization eminently wholesome and well-balanced. He had a strong will, a full and varied emotional nature, an active and subtle intellect, keen and observant senses. Thus equipped, he entered into life with zest and energy. When he says :

How good is man's life, the mere living ! how fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the sense forever in joy !

he gave expression to his own unfailing conviction. In the mere exercise (apart from any end in view) of the activities whose sum makes up life, he found a joy like that of the healthy child in the play of the muscles of limbs and voice. He welcomed whatever called for the energies of man,—whatever challenged effort and compelled struggle. He was ardent, buoyant, confident, an inveterate optimist. Discouragement and repining were alien to his spirit. He himself in the characteristic final utterance of his latest volume claims to be remembered as—

One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break ;  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.

**His philosophy.** —In harmony with this temperament are his fundamental beliefs as to the meaning and purpose of the universe. This present existence of ours with the obstacles which it is ever placing in the way of the spirit's highest aspirations—this unremitting war of the will against the members—has its purpose and explanation in the development of the soul. That purpose is best attained by the strenuous and ardent pursuit of those unattainable ideals that hover before us, and are, by the very fact that they transcend man's powers, a pledge of his kinship with the infinite and divine.

He fixed thee 'mid the dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldest fain arrest  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

Evil and pain are needful hindrances, by struggle against which the soul may grow and gather strength. "The sorrows and disappointments of life, even its defeats are of value as they prevent us accepting complacently any attainment as final." Nor even beyond the gates of death does Browning look for repose or passive beatitude. The next world will be but another stage in progress, where the soul, strengthened and developed by the discipline of earth, may enter upon new struggles with novel difficulties and limitations in order to attain a higher plane of existence. Thus he conceives the soul of man as passing through successive spheres of aspiration and attainment, in an infinite progression towards the absolute perfection which exists in God alone.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
 That turns earth's smoothness-rough,  
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !  
 Be our joys three parts pain !  
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;  
 Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe !

To measure life in any other terms than of soul-development is, therefore, absurd. Success depends on the loftiness of the ideal and the strenuousness of the struggle, not on the attainment of external results. The man who fails is he who, in as far as he may, shirks the discipline, sinks into indifference, or is content like Andrea del Sarto with lower and attainable achievement.

**The tone of his work.**—Based upon such a philosophy and the outcome of such a temperament, it is not wonderful that Browning's poetry is eminently tonic ; that the reader, coming perhaps from the brooding pessimism, the hopeless doubt, the depressing materialism, the cloying sensuousness of so much of the verse of the closing half of the Victorian era, feels in the poetry of Browning a bracing and stimulating atmosphere like the keen breezes from the salt ocean or the open prairie. The poet's voice rings cheerful and confident in the midst of an age of doubt, perplexity and disillusionment, "it sounds loudest and also clearest for the things that as a race we like best . . . . . the fascination of faith, the acceptance of life, the respect

for its mysteries, the endurance of its charges, the vitality of the will, the validity of character, the beauty of action, the seriousness, above all, of great human passion."

**His Style.**—In his form and style, there are effects analogous to these peculiarities of temperament and thought. No accusation has so often been brought against Browning as that of roughness and obscurity. This roughness and obscurity arise, in part at least, from the alertness of the poet's mind, from his love for striking, energetic effects. He passes from thought to thought so swiftly as to disregard the intervening links, and his reader, less ready of apprehension, may feel the shock of disconnectedness. Similarly, though less defensibly, he often omits words (pronouns, connectives, etc.), which are grammatically needful and usually expressed. "If there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect," says Mr. Swinburne in a passage on Browning's obscurity which has become classical, "it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. To charge him with obscurity is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind or complain of the sluggish action of the telegraph wire. He is something too much the reverse of obscure; he is too brilliant and subtle for the ready reader of a ready writer to follow with any certainty the track of an intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity, or even to realize with what spider-like swiftness and sagacity his building spirit leaps and lightens to and fro and backward and forward as it lives along the animated line of its labour, springs from thread to thread and darts from centre to circumference of the glittering and quivering web of living thought woven from the inexhaustible stores of his perception and kindled from the inexhaustible fire of his imagination. He never thinks but at full speed, and the rate of his thought is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a waggon, or the speed of a telegraph to that of a railway. It is hopeless to enjoy the charm or to apprehend the gist of his writings except with a mind thoroughly alert, an attention awake at all points, a spirit open and ready to be kindled by contact with the writer's."\* His style is full of contrasts, of swift transitions, of abrupt changes, of emphasis, of startling imagery. This even manifests itself in a preference for rugged

\* Referring to a review which accused Browning of being "misty," Elizabeth Barrett writes to him (Jan. 19th, 1846): "You are never misty, not even in *Sordello*—never vague. Your graver cuts deep, sharp lines *always*—and there is an extra distinctness in your images and thoughts, from the midst of which, crossing each other infinitely, the general significance seems to escape."

words and harsh combinations of sounds. "He loved the grinding, clashing, and rending sibilants and explosives as Tennyson the tender-hefted liquids. Both poets found their good among Saxon monosyllables, but to Tennyson they appealed by limpid simplicity, to Browning by gnarled and rugged force."\* The smooth-flowing movements of rhythm are not usual with him. His versification is broken, animated, dramatic. Unlike Tennyson who is specially successful in slow, dignified measures, he excels in vigorous verse, as for example in *How they brought the Good News.*†

**His lyrical poems.**—It is perhaps this roughness and abruptness that are the most salient features of his style to a reader fresh from familiarity with the dominant styles of poetry in the 19th century,—from the poetry of Wordsworth, Keats, and Tennyson. From what has been said, it is evident that these peculiarities are not, at least usually, the outcome of either carelessness or caprice. Objectionable or not, they are the expression of the man himself, of his peculiar temperament and genius. But readers of recent English poetry are accustomed to the flawlessly harmonious expression of some dominant mood—of meditative calm, sensuous enjoyment, passionate yearning—to which the poet wholly surrenders himself. Such complete sinking of himself in mere feeling is not usual in Browning. He himself is always there, watching (as it were) the mood—alert, keenly observant, probing his theme, not possessed by, but possessing it. So that the purely lyrical attitude, which is usually the poetic condition productive of the smoothest and most harmonious verse, is not common in Browning's work.‡ Most of his lyrics fully justify the name he gives them; they are *dramatic* lyrics. This does not signify merely that they voice the sentiments of another than the writer, "are so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine." They are not the expression of a general, typical feeling, but of very definite imaginary personage, in a certain definite situation. These latter factors count for quite as much in the poem as the mere feeling. They reveal a personality, a situation quite as much as a sentiment or emotion. Again, they are often not the immediate poetic expression of a feeling, as are *Break, break, break*, or *In the Valley of Caunteretz*, but the poetic presentation of what is

\* Herford's *Robert Browning*, p. 261.

† Compare *Prosipe* and *Crossing the Bar* as an illustration in this difference in rhythmic effects, as well as for an analogous contrast in the ideas expressed and the mental attitude delineated.

‡ The purely lyrical is sometimes to be found; as in *The Guardian Angel*.

imagined as actual speech; as, for example, is the case in *Carolean Times*. An immediate poetic expression will naturally be poetic through and through; but a lyrical form imposed upon what is supposed to be actual speech, will no less naturally exhibit the broken and changeful movements of actual utterance.\*

**Browning the poet of the soul.**—The dramatic quality which pervades even Browning's lyrics is but an example of one of the most distinctive and important characteristics of Browning's work as compared with the great bulk of 19th century poetry. It presents neither the feelings and inner life of the poet himself (as do the shorter poems of Shelley and Matthew Arnold) nor material nature and scenery (as does much of the poetry of Wordsworth and the minor poets of our own time), nor the world of myth and fancy (as do Tennyson's *Lyllis of the King*, or the longer poems of Keats and D. G. Rossetti) but realistic pictures of men and women as they actually are or have been. In later generations this sort of work has been done in novels, and not to any great extent in poetry. But Browning depicts men and women with a breadth, profundity and skill unparalleled in poetry since the days of Shakespeare. He is, however, quite unlike Shakespeare in his point of view and method. He is not mainly interested in seeing men as they bustle through life, acting, moving hither and thither under external influence or inner impulse; he is interested in seeing into their souls, in grasping the inner complex of character and motive which determines man's outer life. And so, he does not, when at his best in exhibiting men and women, use the form of the regular drama, but the form of the *dramatic monologue*. The objective representation of human life has been, in imaginative literature, nearly always associated with story or plot, as in a drama, or in a novel; logically, at least, in such forms of literature, it is the story that is of primary importance. In truth, narratives of linked incidents, i.e., stories, existed and interested primitive men long before characterization (the elaborate depicting of imaginary individuals) had come into literature. Characterization grew up in connection with this narrative in order to account for things happening in the story in one way and not in another, and to quicken our interest in the story by making us familiarly acquainted, as it were, with the actors in it. Now, Browning was not primarily interested in stories; he had no special skill in constructing plot. But he was

\*This is illustrated by the well-known fact that a Shakespeare's genius grew more dramatic in his later plays, his blank verse grows less smooth and regular.

interested in character for its own sake ; he delighted to penetrate into the inner life of man, to understand the soul whence came the actions, rather than to follow the actions themselves. " My stress lay on the incidents in the development of the soul," he said in his preface to *Sordello*, " little else is worth study." Accordingly he finds it expedient to adopt a less usual method of literary exposition, which he describes in his preface to *Paracelsus* as " an attempt to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or of the passions, by the operation of persons and events, and, instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined, to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate throughout, if not altogether excluded."

**His Dramatic Monologues.**—The best form for evolving this inner life, the secret of character, Browning gradually learned, to be the dramatic monologue. In the true dramatic monologue we have no introduction or explanation, but simply the words of a single personage, led, by some situation or crisis, to speak at length to some auditor or auditors who are silent yet influence and shape the course of the speech. The form is capable of considerable variation : the most typical species is admirably exemplified in *Andrea del Sarto* ; the method is broadened out into a series of monologues all arising out of one central incident in Browning's longest poem, *The Ring and the Book* ; the monologue becomes a lyric, in form, in *Give a Rouse* ; it is conceived as a letter in *An Epistle* ; in *Up at a Villa*, place and person addressed are not indicated, hence the dramatic elements count for less ; it occasionally corresponds to the soliloquy of the regular drama as in *Caliban upon Setebos*. In the thoroughly typical species, blank verse, the natural dramatic form, is employed ; but with the increasing importance of the emotional mood, rhyming stanzas are used, more complicated and elaborate in proportion to the predominance of the lyrical element. In the poet's less inspired moments, the dramatic and lyrical elements both tend to disappear, the concrete situation and picture are neglected ; then we have a disquisition in verse, often ingenious and subtle, but scarcely poetry at all, as in *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*. In all cases, that which in a regular drama is made clear to the audience by the persons on the stage, their appearance, expression, gestures, by the scenery, and by the preceding scenes, must be inferred from the scattered

and seemingly accidental hints of the monologue; story, situation, place, person addressed are a matter of inference. This is one of the causes of difficulty to the readers of Browning: the whole poem must be carefully scrutinized and studied before we are in a fitting position to understand the monologue itself.

**Further characteristics.** Some other general characteristics of Browning's work call for brief notice here. In his art, he is a realist, i.e., he tries to present men and women as they are or have been, under the influence of natural and ordinary conditions. The world of fancy and of myth which exercises so great an attraction for many poets—the world where things are more beautiful and the poetic imagination is freer—is scarcely to be found within the voluminous writings of Browning; such a world as we find in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and *The Lady of Shalott*, and *Orange*, or in Matthew Arnold's *Balder Died*, or Keats's *Euphrosyne* and *Hyperion*, or in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, or Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. On the other hand, it is not the merely commonplace that draws him, the "simple truth" of Burns and Wordsworth. His preference is for the striking, subtle and significant in life and character,—not, indeed, for the externally picturesque which appeals to Scott, but for personages and situations that involve some conflict of motive, some subtle phase of character, some debatable problem in conduct, especially some illustration of those principles which Browning holds to be fundamental. In these abstract questions Browning has an interest unusual among poets. He is not satisfied with the imaginative delineation of what he sees about him. He loves to give play to his subtle intellect in argument, which is sometimes sophistical. He likes to state a difficulty from every side. So his volumes are full of poems which not only delineate human nature, but discuss or throw light upon some abstract problem. These may be problems of man's relation to the universe, of conduct, or even of aesthetics. He had a wider acquaintance with and interest in painting and sculpture than any other English poet, and this was strengthened by his continual contact with art through his long abode in Italy; he was also an enthusiastic musician; so that many of his poems were upon the significance and purpose of these arts. He was, further, a man of wide reading, learned in the chronicles of the past, and shared in that power which received so vast a development in the 19th century, the power of seeing and understanding past historical conditions; this is brilliantly exhibited in such poems as *The Bishop Orders his Tomb* and *The Heretic's Tragedy*. Yet he lacks Tennyson's political sense, the interest in the

race as a whole, and in communities as wholes. With him the individual dominates, and the development to which he looks forward is not the development of mankind—the frequent topic of Tennyson's earlier enthusiasm—but the development of the soul in other worlds than this. Here, as in so many other ideas, Browning holds the characteristically Christian point of view. Again, he does not share the enthusiasm of Tennyson and of his own generation, in regard to the progress of science; though in method his work shows the influence of the scientific spirit, in his perception of the immense significance of the seemingly commonplace and trivial, and in his tendency to analysis. But his conclusions are the results not of induction or logical processes of thought, but of intuition. His liking for the dramatic presentation of views upon the questions that interest him, *i.e.*, the presentation not of his own views but of the views of imaginary characters, and his liking for arguing on several sides of a question, are associated with the perception, which he shared with his generation, of the relativity of truth,—that absolute truth is not attainable, and even truth in as far as attainable cannot be adequately expressed in abstract language. Hence, art is the best expression of truth, as he maintains in the closing passage of *The Ring and the Book*. This subtlety of Browning, his interest in abstract problems, dealing with characters taken from remote times, all throw obstacles in the way of his popularity with ordinary readers who prefer the minimum of intellectual activity in his reading. This difficulty is enhanced by a less defensible peculiarity. Browning seems to have inherited from his father a taste for odd and out-of-the-way learning,—a tendency which may have been increased by his never having been forced to follow the well-trodden and familiar paths of a regular school and university course. His works are full not only of allusions but of themes drawn from spheres unfamiliar even to better informed readers. The wide appreciation of his poetry is also hindered by the fact that his works are very numerous and of very varying poetic excellence. Nowhere, however, is the impression of a vigorous and wholesome mind wanting. Like Scott he possesses the enduring potency of a wholesome and noble character.

**Select Bibliography.**—*Life and Letters* by Mrs. Sutherland Orr (Smith, Elder) is the authorised biography; the article in the supplement to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, by Edmund Gosse; *Robert Browning*, by Wm. Sharp (Great Writer Series) with a Bibliography. The complete poetical works are to be

found in a compendious and convenient form as published in two volumes by Smith, Elder, London, or in one volume by Houghton, Mifflin, Boston. A reader unacquainted with Browning is likely to lose himself in the voluminous complete works; for him the best selection is that by Browning himself in two series (Smith, Elder; also republished in cheaper form by Crowell, New York). Various annotated collections have been published for use in schools and colleges; the best for beginners is probably that by Prof. Lovett (Ginn & Co., Boston). Those who have difficulty in appreciating the poems, may be helped by Alexander's *Introduction to the Poetry of Robert Browning* (Ginn & Co., Boston), or Corson's *Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry* (D. C. Heath, Boston). *A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning* by Mrs. Orr (Smith, Elder), and *An Introduction to the Study of Browning* by Arthur Symons (Cassell & Co., London) touch briefly on each poem. Help of a less elementary character is given by Herford's *Robert Browning* (Blackwood, Edinburgh), and Howden's *Robert Browning* (J. M. Dent, London), which while giving some account of the poet's life, are in the main critical. Among the essays on Browning may be mentioned those by Bagehot (*Literary Studies*), Dowden (*Studies in Literature*), Nettleship (*Essays on Robert Browning's Poetry*). Besides these the following books or articles may be added, Berdie's *Browning Encyclopedia*, Cook's *Guide-Book to Browning*, Gosse's *Robert Browning, Personalia*, Mrs. Bronson's articles in *The Critic*, vol. 50, and in *Cornhill Magazine*, new series, vol. 12, also the letters of *Robert Browning and Eli. Barrett*, and the *Letters of Eliz. Barrett-Browning*.

---

### MY LAST DUCHESS.

*My Last Duchess* first appeared in the volume of 1842 entitled *Descriptive Lyricks*, which was the third number of the series *Bells and Pomegranates*. Originally under the general title *Italy and France*, it was associated with the poem now called *Count Gismondo*; the present poem being *I. Italy*; the other *II. France*. In *Poems by Robert Browning*, 1849, it appears (as now) independently under its present name. Perhaps the poet felt that the former title implied that the subject was not merely Italian but typically Italian, which may have been more than he intended; wishing, however, to draw attention to the local characteristics, he subjoined "Ferrara" as indicating the

scene of his imaginary situation. Ferrara is a city of Italy on the Po, the seat of the famous Este family, dukes of Ferrara. Under their influence it became a centre of art and culture, and may have been chosen here by the poet as suggesting an environment of aristocratic predominance and artistic refinement fitted to be the setting for his incidents. Byron's apostrophe in *Childe Harold*, iv., stanza 35, suggests something of this nature :

Ferrara ! in thy wide and grass-grown streets,  
Whose symmetry was not for solitude,  
There seems as 'twere a curse upon the seats  
Of former sovereigns, and the antique brood  
Of Este, which for many an age made good  
Its strength within thy walls, and was of yore  
Patron or tyrant, as the changing mood  
Of petty power impell'd, of those who wore  
The wreath which Dante's brow alone had worn before.

In exemplification, Byron, in the following stanzas, refers to the story of the poet Tasso, who, having fallen in love with the sister of the Duke, was imprisoned for many years as a madman.

The impropriety of classing this poem among the lyrics was doubtless the cause of its being placed in the final edition of Browning's works, not among the *Dramatic Lyrics* but among the *Dramatic Romances*.

*My Last Duchess* is an unusually condensed but typical and striking example of Browning's most characteristic mode of representing human life, already discussed,—the dramatic monologue. The fact that, in the dramatic monologue, the external details, the story, place, situation, are not directly stated but left to inference, makes it needful that the student should read the poem with the utmost care so as to catch every hint for interpretation, and fit every detail to form the background which may serve to bring into clearness the significance of the monologue itself. This is specially true in the case of this particular poem. "There is some telling touch," says Mr. Symons, "in every line, an infinitude of cunningly careless details, instinct with suggestion, and an appearance through it all of simple artless ease, such as only the very finest art can give." Such prolonged and careful study will put the reader into a position where he may be able to appreciate the economy and the power through which what might have been a complete five-act tragedy, is flashed upon us in the compass of some fifty lines.

The poem presents the chance utterances, as it were, of the Duke, the chief actor in a story which is indicated (not narrated), as he unveils to a visitor the picture of his late Duchess. The speaker falls

musingly into a rapid survey of his relations with his wife, thereby involuntarily reveals his own character and briefly but sufficiently indicates hers. A man of commanding personality and aristocratic bearing, he possesses the external graces and refinement proper to his high position and long descent ; he is, further, a virtuoso, with fine artistic sense and enjoyment of the beautiful ; but these have been cultivated as a source of narrow, selfish gratification, apart from all development of the moral and spiritual nature. Accustomed to the utmost deference from all about him, proud, self-centred, and egoistic, his heart is dry as summer dust. When his personal claims, his pride, his sense of conventional propriety collide with the rights of others, he can be, perhaps half-unconsciously, more cruel and more coldly relentless than the primitive savage.

Over against him we catch a vivid glimpse of the fresh, emotional, passionate nature of the unspoiled and inexperienced girl whom, in the bloom of her youthful beauty, he marries. To his arid, cold nature, her finest qualities are an offence. A species of jealousy develops because he cannot reserve her, like the picture, all to himself, —not ordinary jealousy, but jealousy that she should have a life apart from himself, and joys which his worldly and *base* nature cannot feel. In the effort to shape this tender spirit into the conventional mould which his worldly artificial notions prescribe, he crushes first the happiness and next the life of his young wife. Then after a proper interval, doubtless, he seeks to fill her place and improve his financial position by another match. It is in connection with this that he shows to the envoy of a Count, for whose daughter's hand he is a suitor, the picture of his late wife — a masterly presentation, not merely of her exquisite beauty, but of that intensity of soul which looks out from her features and is her chief characteristic. This picture is the occasion of the monologue before us.

The versification should be noted. As compared with the usual structure of the pentameter couplet ; the metrical peculiarities of this poem have the characteristics of Shakespeare's later as compared with his earlier use of blank verse, i.e., the treatment of the verse is dramatic. The thought is not fitted to the flow of the couplet, with pauses at the ends of the odd lines and stronger pauses at the close of the couplets. The chief pauses, in this poem, are predominantly within the lines ; the sense, not the verse, dictates the grouping of the phrases, while the metrical movement, and the recurrence of the rhymes are felt as giving merely a secondary melody to the passage.

**My Last Duchess.** Every word in the title is significant of the Duke's point of view.

1. He draws back the veil which hides the picture of his late wife, in order that the visitor, whom he is addressing, may see it.

2-4. Note how the feelings of the connoisseur dominate; it is the lover of art who speaks, not the lover of the woman pictured.

**3. Frà Pandolf.** An imaginary artist.

5-12. The passionate soul of his beautiful wife unconsciously reveals itself through the face; in this revelation of the inner spirit, which was natural to her (as the following lines show) there is something repellent to the Duke's sense of propriety,—to that dislike for earnestness and intensity, that love for reserve and conventionality which is characteristic of worldly and fashionable life in all times and places.

**6. by design.** As interpreted by the lines which follow, this indicates that Frà Pandolf is a well-known personage, whose character would preclude any suspicion of special relations between painter and sitter. She is as *soulful* as the Duke is soulless, and all her heart came into her face on very slight occasions, as he goes on to exemplify.

9-10. Note how the words in parentheses indicate his value for the picture as a picture, and further that curious desire to keep one's sources of pleasure to oneself, even when the imparting of them would not cost anything - a trait which, in miniature, is familiar to us in selfish and spoiled children.

12-13. **not the first**, etc. Here as in ll. 1, 5, 9 and 10, we have hints, carelessly dropped, as it were, for filling in the background and action,—details of gesture and expression such as we should see with our eyes in the actual drama of the theatre.

**13-15. Sir, . . . . cheek.** The first indication of that peculiar dog-in-the-manger jealousy which is a salient peculiarity of the speaker.

**21. She had**, etc. He falls into a half reverie, somewhat forgetting his auditor, and making, for his own behoof, an apology for his conduct to his wife—not that he thinks it in his heart blameworthy, but even in the most callous there is a vague uneasiness caused by a remorse, even when not importunate enough to be consciously recognized as remorse.

**25-31.** How admirably suggestive of the Duchess, are these touches for the imagination! This combination of reserve and suggestiveness is one great source of the spell which Browning casts over his readers.

25. **My favour.** Some gift of his—a jewel perhaps.

31, fol. The broken structure indicates the difficulty which even he feels in justifying himself. To justify one's conduct in words often reveals unsuspected possibilities of criticism.

33. The Este family was one of the oldest in Europe.

34-35. **Who'd . . . trifling?** The question seems to indicate that there is something in the expression of the person addressed which shows to the Duke, that he is not carrying his listener with him.

45. **I gave commands.** What the commands were the reader may, if he pleases, determine for himself; the idea that he ordered her to be put to death seems to the present editor wholly out of keeping with the rest of the poem. According to Professor Corson, an enquiry addressed to the poet as to what the commands were, served to show that Browning had not himself thought of the matter.

46-47. **There she . . . alive.** This brings the main body of the poem to a close: what remains throws additional light on the character of the speaker, by indicating the circumstances in which the preceding lines have been spoken.

47-48. The two leave the picture to rejoin the company down stairs.

**I repeat, etc.** Evidently, then, a conversation was broken off, to exhibit the picture, a conversation in which arrangements in regard to dowry, etc., were being made with a person (to whom the whole poem is addressed) who has come to negotiate the marriage of the Duke with the daughter of a Count. All this is significant of the Duke's character.

53. **Nay, we'll go, etc.** They evidently reach the top of the staircase on their way to the "company below," and the Duke politely refuses to take the precedence which his guest, belonging of course to a lower social grade, naturally offers.

54. **Notice Neptune, etc.** As they pass the Duke draws attention to a sculptured group wrought by the famous artist, Claus of Innsbruck, with the conscious pride of the possessor of a great work of art.

**Claus of Innsbruck.** This is a purely imaginary personage invented by the poet. *Innsbruck* is the capital of Tyrol.

## CAVALIER TUNES.

First published in No. III. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, the volume entitled *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). The writing of his drama *Strafford*, produced in 1837, had busied the poet's mind with the scenes of the Civil War which affords the historic setting of these poems.

The appropriateness of the term *dramatic* lyric is, in the present case, specially manifest. (1) The verses with the exception of the first stanza of *Marching Along* are the utterances of an imaginary personage, and express his, not the poet's, sentiments. (2) Each poem is supposed to represent an actual speech, and is not, like *In the Valley of Outeretz*, or *Break, break, break*, the immediate poetic expression of a feeling. Thus far, then, these pieces are akin to Antony's speech over the dead body in *Julius Caesar*, or the speeches at the Banquet in *Macbeth*; hence (3) their style has not the smooth steady flow of the ordinary lyric, but the more broken changeful movement of such poetry as is intended to represent actual speech. (4) It is not merely to embody sentiments and thoughts that these poems were written; quite as vivid and as aesthetically valuable as these, is the impression they give us of the bluff cavalier who speaks them—a typical exemplar of an historic development—and of the various situations in which the poems are supposed to be uttered.

Their *lyrical* character is stamped on the face of these poems by their metrical form, and in the fact that each gives expression to one dominating feeling. Attention need not be drawn to the vigour and dash, both in conception and in style and versification, which are specially congenial to Browning's temperament and art.

## I. MARCHING ALONG.

2. **crop-headed.** Unlike the cavaliers, the Puritans wore their hair short; hence also the term "Roundheads."

swing. Hang. Cf. the ordinary imprecation "Go and be hanged."

3. **pressing.** The meaning must not be pressed; the word does not imply here (as it ordinarily does) that any *force* was used in gathering these soldiers.

5. **Marched.** In the first text "marching," as in the choruses of the next two stanzas; the change amended the grammatical structure of the sentence.

7. **Pym.** The parliamentary leader who is familiar to all students of English history, for the prominent part he took in the Petition

of Right, the Impeachments of Strafford and Laud, the Grand Remonstrance, etc. He died in 1843, not long after the outbreak of the Civil War.

8. **parles.** Conferences; the more ordinary form is "parley," though "parle" is frequent in poetry, e.g., *Hamlet*, I., 1.

In an angry parle  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the Iee.

13-14. **Hampden**, the famous resister of ship-money, whose noble and simple character gives him perhaps the chief place in general estimation among the statesmen of the Long Parliament. He died of a wound received in battle in June, 1643. *Hazlrig* and *Fiennes* were also prominent personages on the Parliamentary side. The former was one of the "Five Members" whom Charles attempted to arrest in Jan., 1642—an event which precipitated the resort to arms. Nathaniel Fiennes was a member of the Long Parliament, a commander of a troop of horse in Essex' army, and later attained an unpleasing notoriety by his surrender of Bristol, of which he was governor.

**young Harry.** Sir Henry Vane, known as "the younger" (to distinguish him from his father; so styled in the sonnet addressed to him by Milton), once Governor of Massachusetts, member of the Long Parliament, a leader among the Independents, and hence during the earlier period of Cromwell's career a close ally.

15. **Rupert.** Prince Rupert, nephew of Charles I., famous for his dashing exploits as a cavalry leader in the Civil War.

21. **Nottingham.** It was at Nottingham that Charles set up his standard (Aug. 22nd, 1642) at the beginning of hostilities against Parliament. Doubtless the reference is to this event, and hence the allusion serves to give a date to the imaginary incident of the poem.

## II. GIVE A ROUSE.

Here the speaker is addressing his comrades who are drinking about him; stanza iii. shows that this speech is conceived as belonging to a much later date in the history of the Civil War than that of the previous poem.

**rouse.** A deep draught, as frequently in Shakespeare: e.g., *Hamlet*, I., 4:

The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,  
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up spring reels,  
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, etc.

16. **Noll's.** Noll is a nickname for Oliver, contemptuously applied to Oliver Cromwell by his opponents.

### III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

When first published this poem had the title "My Wife Gertrude."

Here, we seem to be in a still later era in the war, in a time subsequent to the battle of Naseby (1645) when, after great disasters on the field, the cavaliers were maintaining an obstinate resistance in their scattered strongholds.

5. **asleep as you'd say.** It is early in the morning and the inhabitants seem to be all asleep ; but many of the king's partizans, though fearing apparently to show themselves, are listening for the departure of the cavaliers.

10. "Castle Brancepeth" is the subject and "array" the object of the verb "flouts."

**Castle Brancepeth.** It is not likely that the poet had any particular locality in mind ; but there was and is a Castle Brancepeth a few miles from Durham, once the seat of the Nevilles, Earls of Westmoreland. It is mentioned in Wordsworth's *White Doe of Rylstone* :

Now joy for you who from the towers  
Of Brancepeth look in doubt and fear.

11. **laughs.** Says with a laugh "Good fellows," etc.

14-15. **Nay ! I've better,** etc. The punctuation shows that this is conceived as being said by "My wife Gertrude."

---

### "HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX."

This poem was first published in No. VII. of the series of *Bells and Pomegranates*. This number was published in 1845, and was entitled *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. "There is no sort of historical foundation about 'Good News to Ghent.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast [this was in 1838], after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home. It was written in pencil on the fly-leaf of Barton's *Simboli*, I remember." (From a letter of Browning to an American correspondent quoted in the *Academy* for April 2nd, 1881). Under these circumstances accuracy in local

details of the poem need not be expected ; yet the places mentioned are passed in due order as may be seen from the map. Ghent (in East Flanders) and Aix-la-Chapelle (in Rhenish Prussia) are nearly 100 miles apart on a straight line ; the route roughly indicated by the poet would be much longer. The date which follows the title points to the war in which the Dutch secured their independence of Spain. It has been conjectured that there may have been in the poet's mind some vague memory of the pacification of Ghent, which was a treaty of union between the various parts of the Low Countries against the Spaniards ; and the necessity for haste might be accounted for on the supposition that the burghers of Aix had resolved to destroy their city at a certain date unless there were some prospect of its being saved from Spanish dominion. All this is a matter of indifference. The reader has only to suppose some pressing need for tidings arriving in Aix at the earliest moment, in order to enter into the spirit of this extraordinarily animated dramatic lyric—the most widely popular (unless the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* surpass it) of all Browning's poems. The aptness of the metre for the narration of the headlong ride must be apparent to every reader.

**Ghent.** A city of Belgium on the Scheldt, some 30 miles north-west of Brussels.

**Aix**, i.e., Aix-la-Chapelle (German *Aachen*) in Rhenish Prussia.

5. **postern.** A small gate or door (originally a back door) ; a small gate, not the large gate of the fortified town, would be naturally opened on this occasion.

10. **pique.** The *Century Dictionary* gives 'peak' or 'point' as a rare meaning of this word, and quotes this passage in illustration. In Mr. Rolfe's edition there is the following note : "The pommel of the saddle. We state this on authority of an army officer, although the meaning is in none of the dictionaries."

17. On the cathedral church of St. Rombold in Mecheln (Mechlin or Malines) is a massive square tower, 300 feet high, with four dials, each 48 feet in diameter, visible from all the country round.

**half-chime.** The half-hour striking. It is usual in large chimes to indicate the half-hours by half the series of notes which are rung at the hours.

24. **bluff.** Not in the usual figurative sense, but in the more original sense, "presenting a bold, perpendicular front." The *New English Dictionary* quotes from Murchison's *Siluria* (1849), "This rock

frequently forms bluff cliffs." The word here of course belongs to "headland."

38. This line is what they will "remember at Aix."

41. **Dalhem.** "(Dalhem) lies nearly thirty miles north of Aix, and far out of sight. Besides, it is not so placed that any tower near there could be seen lit up by the morning sun, by anyone who was in sight of Aix." (F. Ryland, *Selections from Browning, ad loc.*)

**dome-spire.** In earlier English 'dome' is sometimes used in the sense of 'Cathedral' (like the German *dom*); a passage in which Addison so uses it is quoted in the *New English Dictionary*; this sense would suit the present context; but probably the poet is led to employ the word here because the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle is an octagon, *terminating in a cupola*, 104 feet high.

49. **buffcoat.** *Buff* is a species of leather.

**holster.** Case for pistols attached to the saddle.

50. **Jack-boots.** Large boots reaching above the knee. The whole costume is that of a horseman of the beginning of the 16th century made familiar to us by pictures.

---

### HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

First published in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, No. III. of *Bells and Pomegranates*, 1845. In this volume there were included along with this poem and under its present title, two other poems, viz.: *Here's to Nelson's Memory*, and the poem now called *Home-Thoughts, From the Sea*. The poem is evidently an outcome of Browning's Italian journey of 1838.

The poem expresses marvellously the charm and freshness of an English spring,—a charm unparalleled, as English-speaking people at least feel, in other lands. The poet feels it the more keenly in virtue of the contrast afforded by the very different character of Italian nature—a character which is suggested, for the reader, in the single touch of the last line.

7. **chaffinch.** Mr. Burroughs says in his *Impressions of Some English Birds*: "Throughout the month of May, and probably during all the spring months, the chaffinch makes two-thirds of the music that ordinarily greets the ear as one walks or drives about the country."

10. **whitethroat.** A summer visitant in England, builds in low bushes or among weeds.

14. **thrush.** The song thrush or throstle, one of the finest of British song-birds. Wordsworth speaks of "how blithe the throstle sings"; Tennyson associates it with early spring when

The blackbirds have their wills,  
The throstles too.

The English naturalist, J. G. Wood, describes its song as peculiarly rich, mellow and sustained, and as remarkable for the variety of its notes. On the other hand an American, Burroughs, says: "Next to the chaffinch in volume of song, and perhaps in some localities surpassing it, is the song thrush. . . . Its song is much after the manner of our brown thrasher, made up of vocal altitudes and poses. It is easy to translate its strain into various words or short ejaculatory sentences. . . . "Kiss her, kiss her; do it, do it; be quick, be quick; stick her to it, stick her to it; that was neat, that was neat; that will do." [N.B.—Burroughs' rendering indicates how the bird sings each song "twice over."] . . . Its performance is always animated, loud, and clear, but never, to my ear, melodious, as the poets so often have it. . . . It is a song of great strength and unbounded good cheer; it proceeds from a sound heart and merry throat." (*Some Impressions of English Birds in Fresh Fields*.)

14-16. These lines are often quoted, and afford an example of happy and melodious phrasing, not very common in Browning.

---

#### ANDREA DEL SARTO.

First published in the volume entitled *Men and Women*, 1855. Browning himself said that the poem was suggested by the [so-called] portrait of Andrea del Sarto and his wife in the Pitti Palace in Florence (see illustration); his friend, John Kenyon, wished a copy of this picture and Browning, unable to procure any, wrote the poem as a substitute. The poem is based on the story of Andrea as told by Vasari in his well-known *Lives of the Painters*. The following are the main passages bearing on the poem taken from the translation of Vasari in *Bohn's Library*:—

"At length then we have come, after having written the lives of many artists who have been distinguished, some for colouring, some for design, and some for invention; we have come, I say, to that of the truly excellent Andrea del Sarto, in whom art and

nature combined to show all that may be done in painting, when design, colouring, and invention unite in one and the same person. Had this master possessed a somewhat bolder and more elevated mind, had he been as much distinguished for higher qualifications as he was for genius and depth of judgment in the art he practised, he would beyond all doubt, have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardour and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him; nor did he at any time display one particle of that elevation which, could it but have been added to the advantages wherewith he was endowed, would have rendered him a truly divine painter: wherefore the works of Andrea are wanting in those ornaments of grandeur, richness, and force, which appear so conspicuously in those of many other masters. His figures are nevertheless well drawn, they are entirely free from errors, and perfect in all their proportions, and are for the most part simple and chaste."

Vasari, after describing various paintings by Andrea, proceeds :

"These various labours secured so great a name for Andrea in his native city, that among the many artists, old and young, who were then painting, he was accounted one of the best that handled pencil and colours. Our artist then found himself to be not only honoured and admired, but also in a condition, notwithstanding the really mean price that he accepted for his labours, which permitted him to render assistance to his family, while he still remained unoppressed for his own part, by those cares and anxieties which beset those who are compelled to live in poverty.

"At that time there was a most beautiful girl in the Via di San Gallo, who was married to a cap-maker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping the hearts of men, and among others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents.

"Now it chanced that a sudden and grievous illness seized the husband of this woman, who rose no more from his bed, but died thereof. Without taking counsel of his friends therefore; without regard to the dignity of his art or the consideration due to his genius, and to the eminence he had attained with so much labour; without a word, in short, to any of his kindred, Andrea took this Lucrezia di Baccio del Fede, such was the name of the woman, to be his wife; her beauty appearing to him to merit thus much at his hands, and his love for her having more influence over him than the glory and honour towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances. But when this news became known in Florence, the respect and affection which his friends had previously borne to Andrea changed to contempt and disgust, since it appeared to them that the darkness of this disgrace had obscured for a time all the glory and renown attained by his talents.

"But he destroyed his own peace as well as estranged his friends by this act, seeing that he soon became jealous, and found that he had besides fallen into the hands of an artful woman, who made him do as she pleased in all things. He abandoned his own poor father and mother, for example, and adopted the father and sisters of his wife in their stead; insomuch that all who knew the facts, mourned over him, and he soon began to be as much avoided as he had previously been sought after. His disciples still remained with him, it is true, in the hope of learning something useful, yet there was not one of them, great or small, who was not maltreated by his wife, both by evil

words and despitful actions: none could escape her blows, but although Andrea lived in the midst of all that torment, he yet accounted it a high pleasure."

In speaking of one of Andrea's paintings he says,

"Beneath this group are two figures kneeling, one of whom, a Magdalen with most beautiful draperies, is the portrait of Andrea's wife, indeed he rarely painted the countenance of a woman in any place that he did not avail himself of the features of his wife; and if at any time he took his model from any other face, there was always a resemblance to hers in the painting, not only because he had this woman constantly before him and depicted her so frequently, but also, and what is still more, because he had her lineaments engraven on his heart; it thus happens that almost all his female heads have a certain something which recalls that of his wife.

"While Andrea was thus labouring over these works in Florence, poorly remunerated for his toils, living in wretched poverty and wholly incapable of raising himself from his depressed condition, the two pictures which he had sent into France, were obtaining much admiration from King Francis, and among the many others which had been despatched to him from Rome, Venice, and Lombardy, these had been adjudged to be by far the best. That monarch, therefore, praising them very highly, was told that he might easily prevail on Andrea to visit France, when he might enter the service of His Majesty; this proposal was exceedingly agreeable to the king, who therefore gave orders that everything needful should be done for that purpose, and that a sum of money for the expenses of the journey, should be paid to Andrea in Florence. The latter gladly set forth on his way to France accordingly, taking with him his scholar Andrea Sguazzella.

"Having in due time arrived at the French court, they were received by the monarch very amicably and with many favours, even the first day of his arrival was marked to Andrea by proofs of that magnanimous sovereign's liberality and courtesy, since he at once received not only a present of money, but the added gift of very rich and honorable vestments. He soon afterwards commenced his labours, rendering himself so acceptable to the king as well as to the whole court, and receiving so many proofs of good-will from all, that his departure from his native country soon appeared to our artist to have conducted him from the extreme of wretchedness to the summit of felicity.

"One day he received a letter, after having had many others, from Lucrezia his wife, whom he had left disconsolate for his departure, although she wanted for nothing. Andrea had even ordered a house to be built for them behind the Nunziata, giving her hopes that he might return at any moment; yet as she could not give money to her kindred and connexions, as she had previously done, she wrote with bitter complaints to Andrea, declaring that she never ceased to weep, and was in perpetual affliction at his absence; dressing all this up with sweet words, well calculated to move the heart of the luckless man, who loved her but too well, she drove the poor soul half out of his wits; above all, when he read her assurance that if he did not return speedily, he would certainly find her dead. Moved by all this, he resolved to resume his chain, and preferred a life of wretchedness with her to the ease around him, and to all the glory which his art must have secured to him. He was then so richly provided with handsome vestments by the liberality of the king and his nobles, and found himself so magnificently arrayed, that every hour seemed a thousand years to him, until he could go to show himself in his bravery to his beautiful wife. Taking the money

which the king confided to him for the purchase of pictures, statues, and other fine things, he set off therefore, having first sworn on the gospels to return in a few months. Arrived happily in Florence, he lived joyously with his wife for some time, making large presents to her father and sisters, but doing nothing for his own parents, whom he would not even see, and who at the end of a certain period, ended their lives in great poverty and misery.

"He was nevertheless determined to return to France, but the prayers and tears of his wife had more power than his own necessities, or the faith which he had pledged to the king: he remained therefore in Florence, and the French monarch was so greatly angered thereby, that for a long time after he would not look at the paintings of Florentine masters, and declared that if Andrea ever fell into his hands he would have no regard whatever to the distinction of his endowments, but would do him more harm than he had before done him good. Andrea del Sarto remained in Florence, therefore, as we have said, and from a highly eminent position he sank to the very lowest, procuring a livelihood and passing his time as he best might."

**Andrea del Sarto**, *i.e.*, the Tailor's Andrew (from his father's occupation) was born about 1486, and died in 1531. He belonged to the generation that produced the finest flower of Italian pictorial art, but failed to reach such a point of excellence as is attained by Da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Raphael. "The Italians called him *Il pittore senza errori*, or 'the faultless painter.' What they meant by this must have been that, in all the technical requirements of art, in drawing, composition, handling of fresco and oils, disposition of draperies, and feeling for light and shadow, he was above criticism. As a colourist he went further and produced more beautiful effects than any Florentine before him. His silver grey harmonies and liquid blendings of cool yet lustrous hues have a charm peculiar to himself alone. We find the like nowhere else in Italy. And yet Andrea cannot take rank amongst the greatest Renaissance painters. What he lacked was precisely the most precious gift—inspiration, depth of emotion, energy of thought." —(Symond's *Renaissance in Italy*).

For an example of his art see the illustration, opposite page 35.

As in the case of *My Last Duchess*, the student should read the poem for the purpose of gathering therefrom the details as to the time, place, surroundings, and occasion of this talk of Andrea's with his wife; further, for the indications given of their past history, their relations with one another, the character of Lucrezia, of Andrea, the general trend of his thought, and the principles which the poem is intended to exhibit.

Three points of view may be noted as interesting Browning, and hence the reader, in this particular subject: the human, the artistic, the philosophical. First of all and chiefly, the poem is a delineation of

a bit of genuine human nature and appeals to the wide-spread and natural interest in men and women which is the basis of the attraction in Shakespeare's plays and in all the greatest imaginative writing. Here, we have a man and a woman depicted; we feel how true it is, how real, how vivid, how typical of human nature as we know it. (2) Browning was familiar with Andrea del Sarto's works and he found between the character and life of the man on the one hand, and his pictures on the other, a very striking harmony,—harmony in an even higher degree than is usual in literary, artistic and other products; the work is the man. The artist and his work illustrate a fundamental aesthetic principle of Browning's—that the true worth of art is in the *soul* of the picture, the loftiness, profundity, originality of the idea; that merely technical excellence, skill in embodying this conception, is of secondary importance, that a very great conception, just because of its greatness, cannot be perfectly embodied, and perfection of embodiment therefore implied limitations in the aim and excellence of a work of art. (3) Browning moreover sees in the life, character, and work of Andrea an illustration of some of the fundamental truths of life, of the present order of things. What has just been said of art, is true, in a wider sense, of life. The highest and noblest spirits ever aspire to something beyond their reach: attainment is simply a stage towards higher attainment. The best life necessarily seems imperfect, because the true end of life is not the production of some result external to man, but the development of the man himself,—the gradual elevation of the soul in its never ceasing struggle toward the infinite. This very imperfection in man is the justification of our confidence in there being such a future which may better this imperfection; it is this continual escape from imperfection that gives meaning and occupation for immortality.

This poem is one of the finest examples of Browning's genius, and has little of that harshness of expression, obscurity of meaning, and eccentricity of style which sometimes repel his readers. There is a reason why it should be so: the feeble and passive character of the speaker, and the peaceful and somewhat sentimental mood in which he speaks, are not such as to beget animated, broken, and trenchant utterance.

2. *Lucrezia*. Andrea's wife; see extracts from Vasari above.

2. bear with me for once. The first touch to indicate the timid apologetic attitude of the uxorious husband, and indeed this is but a single aspect of his attitude towards the world in general. Whatever his faults, he is superior to her, a truer husband than she a wife, hence

we feel this yieldingness to be a mark of weakness. The student will note similar touches throughout the poem.

4. An indication of that doubt of his wife's love, and that ungratified yearning for sympathy which permeates the monologue.

6. **his own subject.** The subject of the picture for which Lucrezia has been teasing her husband; it is this picture which has probably been the cause of the quarrel (l. 1).

10, fol. How effectively is the weariness, physical and mental, of the speaker expressed in these lines!

15. **Fiesole.** A very ancient little town that crowns one of the hills to the north of Florence, some three miles from the latter city, and one of the most picturesque objects in the distant landscape as seen from Florence.

20. Action evidently takes place between utterances of these two lines; she complies with her husband's request and they seat themselves.

23-25. This is the sort of reason, as Andrea instinctively feels, that will appeal to Lucrezia. For Lucrezia's services as a model, see extract from Vasari above, p. 161.

29. **my moon.** Professor Corson quotes, to elucidate the use of this word here, the description of Cleopatra in Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women*;

Once, like the moon, I made  
The ever-shifting currents of the blood  
According to my humour ebb and flow.

Perhaps, however, the main suggestion is that of roundness, see l. 26 above, and the face in the picture, opposite page 43.

30-32. She is a self-centred beauty (one sees it in the picture), not only indifferent to her husband but incapable of strong feeling for anybody; she has no heart. In Rosamond Vincy, in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, we have a similar type. It is hinted in the poem that she is not indifferent to everybody, and thus perhaps is why she smiles, —a cynical smile which Andrea interprets as a smile of pleasure at his praise of her beauty.

34-35. See quotation from Vasari above.

36-45. Notice how Browning himself produces a 'harmony' in this passage: the mood of the speaker, the scene so effectively yet so economically suggested, and the music of the verse combine into a perfect unity. It is one of the passages that clearly refute the denial of technical excellence to Browning.

40-51. Fatalism, to which expression is given in these lines, is often the refuge of weak characters. We note it growing upon Hamlet when his active powers become paralyzed towards the close of the play: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." We all, in our weaker moments, put the burden of our faults on circumstances, fate, etc.

54. All that's behind us. His pictures; they are sitting in his studio.

57. cartoon is, technically in art, a design on strong paper of the full size of a work to be subsequently executed on some permanent material.

59. This line is an example of the obscurity which arises from excessive condensation. The interpretation seems to be: "I venture to say that this picture is the right thing; there's a Madonna for you." The Virgin Mary is the subject of the cartoon.

60, fol. His imagination does not surpass his technical skill; hence there is no further possibility of progress in his art.

65. Praise of his work from some person of distinction.

74-5. Again her indifference to his art indicated.

79-86. This is Browning's own doctrine.

93. Morello. A mountain to the north of Florence.

97-98. An oft-quoted saying of Browning's and one of his fundamental principles. In the very imperfection of man lie his future possibilities. What need of another life, if he can get all he wants, in this?

104. He indicates a picture hanging in the room.

105. The Urbinate. Raphael Santi (1483-1520) born in Urbino in Umbria, commonly considered to have brought Italian painting to its highest excellence. The date of this imaginary talk of Andrea would be 1525. Reproductions of his pictures are familiar to all; the Frontispiece gives one of his Madonnas.

106. George Vasari (1511-1574). An Italian artist, more famous as a biographer and art critic, the author of the *Lives of the Painters*, quoted in introductory remarks on this poem. He had been a pupil of Andrea's.

110-117. The drawing is defective. Andrea can do better, but the conception, the spirit, is beyond him.

120, fol. At the bottom of his heart he knows her evil and his own weakness, none the less he makes an idol of her.

130. **Agnolo.** A variant of *Angelo*. Michaelangelo Buonarotti (1475-1564), a Florentine like Andrea, one of the greatest of moderns both in sculpture and painting, as well as a poet of no mean order, a man of learning, an architect and military engineer. An example of his work in fresco is given opposite page 3.

136. Neither was married.

141. **compensates** has here the stress on the second syllable; cp. contemplate, illustrate.

146, fol. See the extract from Vasari quoted p. 161 above.

149. **Francis.** This was Francis I., the French king who met Henry VIII. on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. He was a patron of arts and letters.

150. It was 1518-9 that Andrea was at the French court.

Note the animation of the style of the passage which tells of his life in France to correspond to the passing animation of the speaker—elsewhere so pensive and depressed.

**Fontainebleau.** A town on the Seine, 37 miles south-east of Paris, famous for its chateau, a favourite residence of the kings of France.

153. The historians do not usually give so flattering a description of Francis.

165. **kingly.** Perhaps punning, in a double sense.

170. **grange.** A barn; this is the more original meaning of the word; the sense “farmhouse” is secondary.

173-4. The reward of my highest achievement was to have been you; what does it matter if the reward came before the achievement?

177-9. Andrea imagines some critic giving utterance to these lines as he compares the pictures.

179. Referring again to the fact that his wife was the model for the Madonnas and other female figures in his paintings.

184-93. This story is not an invention of the poet, but based upon an actual anecdote, true or not.

197. **rub it out.** The chalk outline of the arm which he had drawn on the picture.

199-200. An example of the way in which Browning indicates the influence of the auditor on a monologue by imputing a question. The question is very significant of Lucrezia's utter indifference or utter

ignorance about art. For her husband's chief interest she has, as indicated throughout the poem, neither understanding nor care.

203. **And you smile indeed!** A more genuine smile than that of line 33 above.

206-7. Note the pathetic despair of the husband as to getting his wife to understand any except the most material motives.

209. **Morello's gone.** The distant mountain is no longer visible in the growing dusk.

210. "Chiu" is the Italian name for the owl.

220. **Cousin.** Really some gallant of Lucrezia's.

221. **Those loans?** Lucrezia has been successful in coaxing Andrea to give money for the supposed financial straits of the "cousin." Another trait of Andrea's weakness.

226. **I'll pay my fancy.** I'll use my money to gratify my whims,—i.e., in this case to win the smiles of Lucrezia's.

228. **Idle, you call it.** In keeping with what we have already seen of her, she cannot understand.

232. **that is, Michel Agnolo.** Because in comparison with his judgment the opinions of the rest of the world count for nothing.

241. **scudi.** A *scudo* is worth about a crown, or dollar.

245, fol. This feeble condoning of the past, and the attempt to put upon circumstances, the responsibility for his own defects is of a piece with the whole character of Andrea as exhibited in the poem. The genuine remorse of ll. 214-218, as his animation of 151-165, is but a passing mood; he has not sufficient strength of character for genuine repentance.

257. **Yes, etc.** Lucrezia makes a movement to leave him.

259. **What would one have?** This again is an imputed question, either suggested by her expression, or perhaps actually put by Lucrezia in her impatience with what would seem, to her, her husband's senseless maunderings.

261, fol. Indicates (as lines 97-8 above) what, in Browning's opinion, is at once the purpose and the promise of a future existence—the further development of the soul, is deficiencies of this sphere made good in another.

261-2. See Rev. xxi., 15-16: "And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the walls

thereof. And the city lieth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed."

263. **Leonard.** Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), another great Florentine painter, sculptor, architect and engineer. His most famous painting is very familiar in reproductions, the Last Supper, painted on a convent wall in Milan.

— — — — —  
UP AT A VILLA— OWN IN THE CITY.

First appeared in *Men and Women*, 1855. Like *My Last Duchess*, it is a study of the Italian aristocracy. The loss of political freedom, as well as of commercial prosperity from the 16th century onward deprived the higher classes in Italy, more particularly the aristocracy, of the natural outlet for their activities in public affairs. The consequent narrowness and triviality of their lives had its effect upon character. An intellectual and spiritual dry-rot set in. Instead of the great statesmen, preachers, scholars, artists of an earlier date, we have the *virtuosi*; the highest ideal attained was a dilettante curiosity and superficial taste. Seriousness and depth vanished. In the familiar characterization of Italy in his *Traveller*, Goldsmith gives a sketch of this condition of things:

Yet still the loss of wealth is here supplied  
By arts, the splendid wrecks of former pride;  
From these the feeble heart and long-fall'n mind  
An easy compensation seem to find.  
Here may be seen, in bloodless pomp array'd,  
The pasteboard triumph and the cavalcade,  
Processions form'd for piety and love,  
A mistress or a saint in every grove.  
By sports like these are all their cares beguil'd;  
The sports of children satisfy the child.  
Each nobler aim, repress'd by long control,  
Now sinks at last, or feebly mans the soul;  
While low delights, succeeding fast behind,  
In happier meanness occupy the mind.

Browning likes to bring out character and principles by collision with some trivial event or fact, to show the soul revealing itself in its attitude towards the little, no less than towards the great. So, in the present poem, we have a delightful bit of humorous self-revelation on the part of an Italian person of quality, in his feeling with regard to country and city life respectively, — "a masterpiece of irony and of

description." We note the pervading humour, the genial ease, the dramatic vivacity of the style, the appropriate and changeful movement of the verses, the very brief yet efficient sketches of scenes in Italian city and country.

1. Even the enforced economies of the Italian person of quality are characteristic of the class he represents.

4. by Bacchus. *Per Bacco* is a common Italian exclamation.

10. my own. Supply "skull" from line 8.

11, fol. The limitations of his aesthetic nature are shown in what he admires.

18-25. In these exquisite suggestions of scenery there is more of Browning than of the 'Italian person of quality.'

23. scarce risen three fingers well. The wheat is scarcely well up to three fingers in height.

26. The fountains are frequent and very attractive features of Italian towns; every traveller is impressed by the fountains of Rome.

29. conch. A marine shell.

39. diligence. Stage-coach.

42. Pulcinello. A grotesque character in Italian comedy, a buffoon. *Punch*, the hump-backed fellow in the puppet-show, is a derivative.

44. liberal thieves. The prejudices of his class lead him to identify thieves with persons of liberal political opinions.

46. crown and lion. The Duke's coat-of-arms; it is needless to seek for an Italian duke with such insignia; the poet evidently does not desire that the locality of his poem should be identified with any particular place.

47, fol. Suggest the literary coteries that cultivated both prose and poetry in the days of Italian decadence. Those familiar with Milton's life will recall his intercourse with Florentine academies of this nature.

48. Dante (1265-1321), Boccaccio (1313-1375), Petrarch (1304-1374), are the three greatest names in Italian literature; St. Jerome belongs to the 4th century A.D., was the most learned and eloquent of the Fathers. This incongruous union of writers so different as the authors of the *Divine Comedy*, the *Decameron*, and the *Songs to Lazarus*, with the great Christian theologian and the Roman orator stamps sufficiently the literary pretensions of the writer of the sonnet.

50. he. The Rev. Don so-and-so; 'than he had ever before preached.'

51. The last four lines of the stanza give the crowning instance of the utter frivolity of mind that belongs to the speaker. Even a religious procession means nothing more to him than a bit of noise and bustle to fill the emptiness of his meaningless life and vacant mind. These lines cap the climax also of the poet's skill in treating his theme.

52. The seven swords are emblematic of the seven dolours of our Lady of Sorrow. Cf. the words of Simeon to Mary: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke ii., 35).

56. It has long been a favourite expedient for raising a municipal revenue in various cities on the continent, to tax all provisions entering the city bounds.

59, fol. The speaker inspired with enthusiasm for the pleasures he is talking of, sees in imagination [it seems to be imagination, the touches in the beginning, e.g. "yon cypress" of line 32, seem to show that he is in the country, as the state of his purse also makes probable] one of those religious processions which he so much admires, and ends his talk with a delightful outburst of regretful enthusiasm.

---

### LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

First published in the volume entitled *Men and Women*, 1855. It was of course written during the poet's residence in Italy, and the description is redolent of the characteristics of certain Italian scenes where the shattered remnants of past ages (associated with the historic movement and the animation of other times) have been incorporated into her own works by the softening hand of Nature. By the view of the Campagna (the district about Rome) with the ruins of an aqueduct in the foreground, at opposite page, the editor has, with no great success, attempted to give some visual conception of this characteristic of Italian scenery.

The poem is admirable for the way in which it expresses the quiet charm of the present scene, and the eager animation of the past; but, above all, in the way in which everything is made to contribute to the expression of the intense passion of the love story, which gathers force as the speaker proceeds and culminates in the dramatic summing up of the final line.

"*Love among the Ruins* is constructed in a triple contrast; the endless pastures prolonged to the edge of sunset, with their infinity of calm, are



*View of the Cumbruna*

To face p. 170



contrasted with the vast and magnificent animation of the city which once occupied the plain and the mountain slopes. The lover keeps at arm's length from his heart and brain, what yet fills them all the while, here in this placid pasture-land, is one vivid point of intensest life; here where once were the grandeur and tumult of the enormous city is that which in a moment can abolish for the lover all its stories and its shames. His eager anticipation of meeting his beloved, face to face and heart to heart, is not sung, after the manner of Burns, as a jet of unmixed joy; he delays his rapture to make its arrival more entirely rapturous; he uses his imagination to check and enhance his passion; and the poem, though not a simple cry of the heart, is entirely true as a rendering of emotion which has taken imagination into its service." (Dowden).

The versification is peculiar and gives a touch of that oddity and seeming caprice which belong to Browning; but when the reader has surmounted the initial unfamiliarity, the movement seems effective and appropriate, "beautifully adapted," as Mr. Symons remarks, "to the tone and rhythm—the quietness and fervent meditation—of the subject."

2. **Miles and miles.** Adverbial modifier of "smiles."

9. **its prince, etc.** The relative is omitted; the clause is adjectival to "capital."

15. **certain rills.** Again supply the relative, "slopes which certain," etc.

17. **they.** The slopes of verdure.

21. These may be a reminiscence of Homer's description of Thebes in Egypt (*Iliad*, ix., 381), which had a hundred gates.

29. **guessed alone.** The vestiges of the city are so far obliterated that the existence of the city can only be conjectured.

39. **caper.** A trailing shrub which is found in Mediterranean countries, especially growing in dry places over rocks and walls.

49. The first four stanzas are introductory, we now draw towards the real theme.

63. The ruins of the various objects enumerated here form a conspicuous feature in Italian landscapes, especially the causeys, the old Roman paved roads, and aqueducts.

**causeys.** The older spelling (see *e.g.*, *Paradise Lost*, x., 415); the modern form "causeway" is due to popular etymology; the word really comes from the Low Latin *calcicare*, to make a road with lime or mortar.

## THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

Published in *Men and Women* (1855), it was written in 1848, see letter quoted below. This poem is of a somewhat exceptional character among Browning's pieces: it is, on the face of it, an expression of personal feeling; the feeling—a desire for soothing and calming influence with its pathetic tone—is not common in Browning; nor is the slow and steady movement of the verse.

Fano is a town on the Adriatic, some 30 miles north of Ancona. In the church of St. Augustine there is a picture known as *L'Angelo Custode* (the Guardian Angel), by Guercino (1590-1666) which "represents an angel standing with outstretched wings beside a little child. The child is half-kneeling on a kind of pedestal, while the angel joins its hands in prayer; its gaze is directed upwards towards the sky, from which cherubs are looking down." See the photographic reproduction opposite page 57. The painting is not ranked high by the connoisseurs, but Browning and his wife were attracted by its simple pathos. Mrs. Browning writes in one of her letters (see Mrs. Orr's *Life of Browning*, p. 159): "Murray, the traitor, sent us to Fano as 'a delightful summer residence for an English family,' and we found it uninhabitable from the heat, vegetation scorched into paleness, the very air swooning in the sun, and the gloomy looks of the inhabitants sufficiently corroborative of their words that no drop of rain or dew ever falls there during the summer. . . . Yet the churches are very beautiful, and a divine picture of Guercino's is worth going all that way to see. . . . We fled from Fano after three day's, and finding ourselves cheated of our dream of summer coolness, resolved on substituting for it what the Italians call *un bel giro*. So we went to Ancona—a striking sea-city, holding up against the brown rocks and elbowing out the purple tides, beautiful to look upon. An exfoliation of the rock itself, you would call the houses that seem to grow there—so identical is the colour and character. I should like to visit Ancona again when there is a little air and shadow. We stayed a week as it was, living upon fish and cold water."

7. **retrieve.** Rather unusual use of the word; to bring back to a proper state; so we talk of 'retrieving one's fortunes.'

37. **Alfred.** Alfred Domett (1811-1887) an early friend of Browning's, himself a poet. At the time this poem was written Domett was in New Zealand, whither he migrated in 1842, and where he became a prominent public man. His departure from London to New Zealand is commemorated in Browning's poem *Waring*.

51. endured some wrong, at the hands of the critics, presumably.

55. Wairoa. A river and arm of the sea on the west-coast of the North Island of New Zealand.

---

## AN EPISTLE.

In section xxxi. of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, the poet touches upon the silence of the evangelist in regard to the experiences and results of that marvellous event in the history of Lazarus, his death and return again to this world of flesh and blood (see *John*, chap. xi.). In the poem before us Browning ventures to conceive some of the possible results of this strange experience. He represents these results as conforming to one of his own fundamental principles, viz., that this earthly existence has its real end in exercising and developing the soul for a higher sphere beyond the gates of death; that the things for which and against which we men so earnestly struggle, have—could we see them as they really are—no intrinsic importance; but that they are made to *seem* important, in order that by eager pursuit of them we may develop and strengthen the soul,—the only thing that abides and has real worth. If this be so we might imagine that one who had penetrated the higher sphere and attained the deeper insight which belongs to it, might regard the objects which rouse the energies of ordinary men, with utter indifference; and hence his profounder knowledge might in so far unfit him for life in a lower sphere. This theory would, therefore, serve as at least a partial explanation of the purpose of God in the limitation of the powers and knowledge of man,—as a partial solution of this problem of evil, why man is encompassed with temptations and suffering on every side.

The concrete example of this theory in the case of Lazarus is the centre about which the poem gathers, but more space is given and more interest attaches to another subject interwoven with this, viz., the effect of an encounter with Christianity—its influence and its central doctrine of the incarnation—upon a learned man of the early years of our era, imbued with whatever of scientific spirit then existed. This effect is not merely local; the poet makes us feel it as typical of the fitness of Christianity to the needs of men at all periods.

Such are the abstract ideas which here, as in so many of Browning's poems, lie behind the concrete picture and give significance thereto. But the real merit of the poem lies, of course, in the concrete embodiment

of the ideas ; namely, in the lifelike fashion in which Karshish is made, through his letter, to reveal his own character ; and in the reluctant yet forcible fashion in which he betrays, notwithstanding his prejudices as a man of learning, the profound impression that his acquaintance with Christianity has made upon him.

The concrete picture is as usual to be gathered from the whole monologue ; and monologue this is, though it happens to be a written not a spoken one. Karshish is represented as a learned physician travelling to gratify his scientific curiosity and increase his professional knowledge. Of his acquisitions he gives from time to time accounts (see l. 20) to his old teacher, supposedly a great master of the learning of the time. On his travels he comes to Bethany in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, meets with Lazarus and learns his story. Lazarus must now be an old man, for reference is made to the attack of Jerusalem by Titus, which ended in the destruction of the city, A.D. 70.

“There are few more lifelike and subtly natural narratives in Mr. Browning’s poetry, few more absolutely penetrated by the finest imaginative sympathy. The scientific caution and technicality of the Arab physician, his careful attempt at a statement of the case from a purely medical point of view, his self-reproachful uneasiness at the strange interest which the man’s story has caused in him—the strange credulity which he cannot keep from encroaching on his mind: all this is rendered with a matchless delicacy and accuracy of touch and interpretation. Nor can anything be finer than the representation of Lazarus after his resurrection—a representation which has significance beyond its literal sense, and points a moral often enforced by the poet,—that doubt and mystery, so frequently complained of in life and religion, are necessary concomitants of both, without which, indeed, neither religion nor life would be possible.” (Symond’s *Introduction to Browning*).

1. The Epistle opens in the form customary at the time ; compare openings of the Epistles in the New Testament.

3-14. These lines let us understand the point of view of Karshish ; he is not a polytheist or a materialist ; he believes in one God and in the spiritual nature of man. The special idea as to the relation between body and soul is merely such a theory as might be entertained by such a man at such a time, and the chief purpose of its introduction is to make us understand that the writer believes in the spiritual origin of man.

17-20. Notwithstanding his learning Karshish is not free from the superstitions of his time, and believes in charms, e.g., the power of stones to absorb the poison of snake-bites.

21. **My journeyings**, etc. i.e., in my previous letters I brought the narrative of journeys up to my arrival at Jericho.

28. It was the son, Titus, who besieged and captured Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He was emperor of Rome, 79-81. Vespasian his father was emperor 70-79.

29. He gives the various incidents that have befallen him; the picture of the lynx, in its startling effectiveness and brevity, is characteristic of Browning's manner.

37-8. He recognizes the humour of the method of indicating distance to which his professional enthusiasm leads him.

42. **choler**. In its original sense 'bile.'

43. **tertians**. Fevers which recur every *third* day.

45. **school**. School of medicine.

**spider**. It is not improbable that this description is based upon some account read by Browning. Perhaps it refers to the particular spider found in Palestine described in the following: "Among them [the spiders of the Holy Land] is one very extraordinary species, the Mason Spider (*Mygale Cementaria*) which excavates a home in the earth, lines it and forms a trap door with a silken hinge, which closely fits the aperture, and is constructed of webs with earth firmly imbedded in them and agglutinated. The door fits so closely and so exactly resembles the surrounding soil that detection is impossible."

48, fol. The letter is to be sent by a Syrian vagabond whom he has picked up; he dares not trust in the hands of such a person the medical recipe which he was about to impart to Abib. Ancient medicine delighted in odd drugs, powdered mummy was one. Pliny speaks of spiders powdered up with oil as an ointment for the eyes.

50. **sublimate**. A common term in elder chemistry for products resulting from heating bodies to a vapour and then allowing the vapour to condense, e.g., corrosive sublimate, a chloride of mercury.

51. **ailing eye**. Diseases of the eye are very common among the poor in the East.

55. **gum-tragacanth** is obtained from thorny shrubs, natives of Asia Minor and Persia. The finest variety is known as flake-tragacanth, consisting of flakes one to three inches long by one inch in breadth.

57. **porphyry** is a name employed for various sorts of ornamental stones used in architecture, in the manufacture of vases, etc. Here the word is used for a mortar made of porphyry.

60. Like some modern medical men, he exposes himself to infection that he may the better understand the disease.

62. All that goes before reveals the character of the writer and his usual interests; but, in truth, though he is half ashamed to confess it, these interests have for the time being at least, been overwhelmed by the wonderful conception of God's relation to man revealed to him by Lazarus. The effect of this, only gradually and reluctantly manifested, does not fully come out until the concluding lines.

my Syrian. See l. 49 above.

63. my price. The fee for his medical service.

71. Karshish, conscious of culture and learning, is ashamed to have allowed his ideas to be affected from such a source, and tries to make Abib (and perhaps himself) believe that he really treats his experience with Lazarus as a trifling matter.

79, fol. He first gives what might be the scientific and rational explanation of the matter, which in his own heart he cannot accept as adequate.

82. exhibition. Used technically in medicine, in the sense of 'administration of a remedy.'

85. The evil thing. The cause of the disease, whatever it was.

91. at that vantage. The advantage afforded by the fact that this conceit (idea) was the first after the passing of the trance.

100. cf. Matthew ii., 23: "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

103. fume. "The vapour given off by acids and volatile substances; said especially of exhalations which are irritant, stifling, or the like" (*New English Dictionary*).

106. saffron. A drug derived from the flowers of a certain plant (*Crocus sativus*), much used formerly both as a medicine and as a dye.

109. sanguine, in the medical sense, is applied to persons with an abundant supply of blood and vigorous circulation.

111-116. The poet chooses to represent the miraculous event of Lazarus' life as having a permanent effect upon his physical state; there is an extraordinary freshness and wholesomeness in his bodily frame.

120-242. Upon his mental and spiritual state his marvellous experience has also left permanent results. He has attained, in a measure

at least, the knowledge and insight that belongs to the higher sphere of existence into which the soul passes through the gates of death. He measures things not by the significance which they have in this earthly sphere, but by their absolute worth.

139-40. A knowledge beyond that which is permitted to man in his earthly pilgrimage, and hence a knowledge which really unfitst him for life here. Just as, should a boy have the point of view of a fully developed man, but the powers and conditions of a little child, he would be unable to take an interest in the trivial employments of childhood, and hence fail to get the wholesome exercise for his activities that belongs to normal childhood and prepares for the maturer life.

149-153. Because, while the fact may seem little to Karshish, and from the standpoint of the ordinary man, one who has a deeper insight into reality, perceives that this seemingly little thing is of profound significance for eternity.

157-8. His wonder and doubt arise on, as it seems to Karshish, absurd occasions, when there is no need of them.

167-8. *our lord who, etc.*, suggests some mysterious sage from whom both Abib and Karshish learned in their youth.

170-3. Note Karshish's superstition and his quaint astronomical theory.

174. Obscure passage—seemingly presents what was in the mind of "our lord who dwelt," etc., as he saw the ignorant tykes trifling with his stupendous charms; "thou" is *Ante*; "the child," Karshish.

177. **Greek fire.** An inflammable and explosive compound of naphtha, sulphur, etc., used in war to set fire to the enemy's towns, ships, etc.; see account of the siege of Constantinople in Gibbon's history, chap. iii.

178. **He.** Lazarus.

179-185. This narrow life he must, of force, lead as long as the soul remains in its earthly tabernacle. Yet his abnormal insight makes him conscious of the great spiritual powers and possibilities that surround the present world, to which ordinary men are blind, and hence by which they are unaffected. But though he is conscious of spiritual life around the earthly life, his consciousness is of no avail to him, for he is under the same limitations as other men in regard to action.

186-190. He is continually impelled to act in accordance with his other-world insight, instead of moving on within the narrow possibilities and according to the limited action which Providence has assigned to the present order of things.

195. **Admonishes.** Reminds him in what world he is living and what are its limitations.

205. **'Sayeth.** The apostrophe indicates the omission of the subject *he* (*i.e.*, Lazarus), a common mannerism of Browning.

205-217. This quietism and inactivity are not, in Browning's opinion as we gather from his works in general, commendable tendencies in the life of man. Man's business here is to throw himself into the struggles of this life with all strenuousness that he may gain the spiritual development which this passing stage in the soul's existence is intended to give. The present passage contains the implication, therefore, that the limitations of our insight, etc., are not real evils or defects in the constitution of our universe, but needful conditions in order that objects open to us here may sufficiently stimulate all our energies.

226. **apathetic.** Void of natural feeling.

235. Lazarus has learned that his fellow-men neither have, nor can have, his insight into real truth, and that, of necessity, they must follow their own inadequate lights, and cannot benefit by his superior knowledge. This is admirably brought out by the comparison of lines 236-242. The latter passage also serves the subsidiary purpose of lighting up the character of Karshish.

250. **to the setting up.** For the purpose of the setting up of a rule and creed which Karshish professed to find monstrous and absurd.

252. **earthquake.** See Matthew xxvii., 51: "And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."

253-5. It was thus that Abib and Karshish accounted for the earthquake.

259. **How could**, etc. Unconscious irony.

265. **leech.** Old-fashioned word for physician.

277, fol. The struggle between what had been his habitual way of looking at things, his intellectual attitude,—the attitude which would approve itself to his friend Abib, on the one hand, and the sense of illumination, of a true solution of the religious problem on the other, shows itself from this point onward. We gather that the critical attitude which is exhibited throughout the letter has been assumed; the true impression produced by Lazarus' revelations is given in the concluding paragraph.

## PROSPICE.

First published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1864; appeared in the same year in *Dramatis Personæ*. We cannot be wrong in connecting this poem with the death of Mrs. Browning in 1861. "*Prospice* has all the impetuous blood and fierce lyric fire of militant manhood. It is a cry of passionate exultation and exultation in the very face of death; a war-cry of triumph over the last of foes." (Symonds). It may be compared with *Crossing the Bar*; the passionate fire, the energy and love of struggle are as characteristic of Browning as are the dignity, grace and perfection in the other poem are of Tennyson. It is noteworthy that the point of view in *Crossing the Bar* is easily comprehended and commends itself to the ordinary feelings of humanity; that of *Prospice* is more individual and remoter from average sympathies.

**Prospice** is the Latin imperative meaning 'Look forward.'

1. **to feel, etc.** This is in apposition to "death"; a detail of the sort of thing one fears.
9. **the summit attained.** The ultimate point of our earthly career.
19. **life's arrears.** Whatever is yet unpaid of pain, etc.

---



## APPENDIX.



## APPENDIX.

### SELECTIONS FOR "SIGHT" READING.

#### 1.—MY STAR.

All that I know  
    Of a certain star  
Is, it can throw  
    (Like the angled spar)  
Now a dart of red,  
    Now a dart of blue ;  
Till my friends have said  
    They would fain see, too,  
My star that dartles the red and the blue !  
Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower hangs furled :  
    They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.  
What matter to me if their star is a world ?  
    Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love it.

5

10

5

10

#### 2.—SONG FROM PIPPA PASSES.

All service ranks the same with God :  
If now, as formerly he trod  
Paradise, his presence fills  
Our earth, each only as God wills  
Can work - God's puppets, best and worst,  
Are we ; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event !" Why "small" ?  
Costs it more pain than this, ye call  
A "great event," should come to pass,  
Than that ? Untwine me from the mass  
Of deeds which make up life, one deed  
Power shall fall short in or exceed !

## 3.—ANOTHER SONG FROM PIPPA PASSES.

The year's at the spring,  
 And day's at the morn ;  
 Morning's at seven ;  
 The hillside's dew-pearled ;  
 The lark's on the wing ;  
 The snail's on the thorn :  
 God's in his heaven—  
 All's right with the world !

5

## 4.—APPARITIONS.

## I.

Such a starved bank of moss  
 Till, that May-morn,  
 Blue ran the flash across :  
 Violets were born !

## II.

Sky—what a scowl of cloud  
 Till, near and far,  
 Ray on ray split the shroud :  
 Splendid, a star !

5

## III.

World—how it walled about  
 Life with disgrace  
 Till God's own smile came out :  
 That was thy face !

10

## 5.—ONE WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
 Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves  
 And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
 She will not turn aside ? Alas !  
 Let them lie. Suppose they die ?  
 The chance was they might take her eye.

5

## II.

How many a month I strove to suit  
 These stubborn fingers to the lute !  
 To-day I venture all I know.  
 She will not hear my music ? So !  
 Break the string ; fold music's wing :  
 Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

10

## III.

My whole life long I learned to love.  
 This hour my utmost art I prove  
 And speak my passion—heaven or hell ?  
 She will not give me heaven ? 'T is well !  
 Lose who may—I still can say,  
 Those who win heaven, blest are they !

15

## 6.—HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest died away ;  
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, rocking into Cadiz Bay ;  
 Blush 'mid the burning water, fall in face Trafalgar lay ;  
 In the dimmest Northeast distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and gray ;  
 "Here and here did England help me : how can I help England?"—say,  
 Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray, [5]  
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## 7.—THE LOST LEADER.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us.  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :  
 How all our copper had gone for his service !  
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,

5

10

Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die ?  
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves !  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen, 15  
 —He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

We shall march prospering,—not through his presence ;  
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;  
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,  
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire : 20  
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
 One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,  
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !  
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us ! 25  
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
 Never glad, confident morning again !  
 Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,  
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ; 30  
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

---

#### 8.—AMONG THE ROCKS.

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,  
 This autumn morning ! How he sets his bones  
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet  
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;  
 Listening the while, where on the heap of stones 5  
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true ;  
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.  
 If you loved only what were worth your love,  
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you : 10  
 Make the low nature better by your throes !  
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above !

## 9.—THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

Morning, evening, noon and night,  
“Praise God!” sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well ;

5

O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, “Praise God!”

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

10

Said Blaise, the listening monk, “Well done ;  
I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

“As well as if thy voice to-day  
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

“This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
Praises God from Peter's dome.”

15

Said Theocrite, “Would God that I  
Might praise him that great way, and die !”

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone.

20

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, “Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight.”

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

25

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsmen well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

30

And from a boy, to youth he grew ;  
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay ;

And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.

35

(He did God's will ; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear ;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear :

40

"So sing old worlds, and so  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways :  
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

45

'T was Easter Day, he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

50

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite.

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since, when a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

55

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And, rising from the sickness drear,  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

60

To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.

“I bore thee from thy craftsman’s cell,  
And set thee here ; I did not well.

“Vainly I left my angel-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

“Thy voice’s praise seemed weak ; it dropped--  
Creation’s chorus stopped !

“Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

“With that weak voice of our disdain,  
Take up creation’s pausing strain.

“Back to the cell and poor employ :  
Resume the craftsman and the boy !”

Theocrite grew old at home ;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s dome.

One vanished as the other died :  
They sought God side by side.

65

70

75

## 10.—RABBI BEN EZRA.

## I.

Grow old along with me !  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made :  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith “A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all nor be afraid !”

5

## II.

Not that, amassing flowers,  
Youth sighed “Which rose make ours,  
Which lily leave and then as best recall ?”  
Not that, admiring stars,  
It yearned “Nor Jove, nor Mars ;  
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all !”

10

## III.

Not for such hopes and fears  
 Annulling youth's brief years,  
 Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !  
 15  
 Rather I prize the doubt  
 Low kinds exist without,  
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

## IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
 Were man but formed to feed  
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :  
 20  
 Such feasting ended, then  
 As sure an end to men ;  
 Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast ?

## V.

Rejoice we are allied  
 To That which doth provide  
 And not partake, effect and not receive !  
 25  
 A spark disturbs our clod ;  
 Nearer we hold of God  
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

30

## VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !  
 Be our joys three-parts pain !  
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;  
 Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe !  
 35

## VII.

For thence,—a paradox  
 Which comforts while it mocks,—  
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :  
 What I aspired to be,  
 And was not, comforts me :  
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.  
 40

## VIII.

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,  
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play ?  
 To man, propose this test—  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way ?

45

## IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use :  
 I own the Past profuse  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn :  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole ;  
 Should not the heart beat once “ How good to live and learn ? ”

50

## X.

Not once beat “ Praise be Thine !  
 I see the whole design,  
 I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :  
 Perfect I call thy plan :  
 Thanks that I was a man !  
 Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do ! ”

55

60

## XI.

For pleasant is this flesh ;  
 Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest ;  
 Would we some prize might hold  
 To match those manifold . . .  
 Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best !

65

## XII.

Let us not always say  
 “ Spite of this flesh to-day  
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole ! ”  
 As the bird wings and sings,  
 Let us cry “ All good things  
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul ! ”

70

## XIII.

Therefore I summon age  
 To grant youth's heritage,  
 Life's struggle having so far reached its term : 75  
 Thence shall I pass, approved  
 A man, for aye removed  
 From the developed brute ; a god though in the germ.

## XIV.

And I shall thereupon  
 Take rest, ere I be gone  
 Once more on my adventure brave and new : 80  
 Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

## XV.

Youth ended, I shall try  
 My gain or loss thereby ; 85  
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold :  
 And I shall weigh the same,  
 Give life its praise or blame :  
 Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall know, being old. 90

## XVI.

For note, when evening shuts,  
 A certain moment cuts  
 The deed off, calls the glory from the grey :  
 A whisper from the west  
 Shoots—"Add this to the rest,  
 Take it and try its worth : here dies another day." 95

## XVII.

So, still within this life,  
 Though lifted o'er its strife,  
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
 "This rage was right i' the main,  
 That acquiescence vain : 100  
 The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

## XVIII.

For more is not reserved  
 To man, with soul just nerved  
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day : 105  
 Here, work enough to watch  
 The Master work, and catch  
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

## XIX.

As it was better, youth  
 Should strive, through acts uncouth, 110  
 Toward making, than repose on aught found made :  
 So, better, age, exempt  
 From strife, should know, than tempt  
 Further. Thou waitedest age : wait death not be afraid !

## XX.

Enough now, if the Right  
 And Good and Infinite  
 Be named here, as thou call'st thy hand thine own,  
 With knowledge absolute,  
 Subject to no dispute  
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone. 120

## XXI.

Be there, for once and all,  
 Severed great minds from small,  
 Announced to each his station in the Past !  
 Was I, the world arraigned,  
 Were they, my soul disdained, 125  
 Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last !

## XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate ?  
 Ten men love what I hate,  
 Shun what I follow, slight what I receive ;  
 Ten, who in ears and eyes  
 Match me: we all surmise,  
 They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe ? 130

## XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass  
 Called “work,” must sentence pass,  
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price ;  
 O'er which, from level stand,  
 The low world laid its hand,  
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice :

135

## XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
 And finger failed to plumb,  
 So passed in making up the main account ;  
 All instincts immature,  
 All purposes unsure,  
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount :

140

## XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
 Into a narrow act,  
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
 All I could never be,  
 All, men ignored in me,  
 This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped. 150

145

## XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
 That metaphor ! and feel  
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—  
 Thou, to whom fools propound,  
 When the wine makes its round,  
 “Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past gone, seize to-day !” 155

## XXVII.

Fool ! All that is, at all,  
 Lasts ever, past recall ;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :  
 What entered into thee,  
 That was, is, and shall be :  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure.

160

## XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest :  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

185

## XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves  
 Which ran the laughing loves  
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?  
 What though, about thy rim,  
 Scull-things in order grim  
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress ?

170

## XXX.

Look not thou down but up !  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips aglow !  
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel ?

175

[180]

## XXXI.

But I need, now as then,  
 Thee, God, who mouldest men ;  
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,  
 Did I,—to the wheel of life  
 With shapes and colours rife,  
 Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst :

185

## XXXII.

So, take and use Thy work :  
 Amend what flaws they lurk,  
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !  
 My times be in Thy hand !  
 Perfect the cup as planned !  
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same !

190

Thir

Fou

So p

That

Fanc

This,

Why

“Sin

Eartl

Time

0083-2

○

✓ 0









BINDING



3

202300413093

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

---

PR                    Alexander, William John (ed.)

5553                Select poems

A5

cop.3

Wallace

Room

SIGMUND SAMUEL LIBRARY

